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AN  
HISTORICAL MEMOIR  
OF THE  
PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY,  
FOR  
PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY;  
THE  
RELIEF OF FREE NEGROES UNLAWFULLY HELD IN BONDAGE,  
AND FOR  
IMPROVING THE CONDITION OF THE AFRICAN RACE.  
COMPILED FROM  
THE MINUTES OF THE SOCIETY AND OTHER OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS,  
BY  
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AND PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE SOCIETY.

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At the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, held in Clarkson Hall, Twelfth month 30th, 1847, it was, on motion,

*Resolved,* That a committee of three be appointed to request of our President a copy of his memoir on the Rise and Progress of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c., for publication, with power to make such amendments therein as may be deemed necessary.

The following members were appointed the committee:—  
Isaac Parrish, Stephen Byerly, B. C. Bacon.





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# HISTORICAL MEMOIR.

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## CHAPTER I.

The pages of history, from the earliest period of time, present a sorrowful picture of the depravity of human nature. In the holy and peaceful vale of Eden, wherein our primeval parents are represented to have been first located by the Creator of the world, a state of probation seems to have been allotted, and the choice of good or evil set before them. The unalterable fiat of Omnipotence was fully made known, and the perfect law of liberty revealed unto man. Obedience to the Divine command was the condition on which his state of peace, tranquillity and true happiness was made to depend ; whereas, on the other hand, he was fully assured, that disobedience would bring death to all these sources of pure enjoyment : the evil passions of his animal nature would obtain the ascendancy, and woe and misery be the inevitable consequence. The alternative was a fearful one—yet man in the exercise of his own free will chose to act contrary to the commands of his Creator, and in so doing incurred all the heavy responsibility of wilful disobedience. The dire effects of this were soon visible amongst his posterity ; one of whom, in the like self-willed disposition as had been evinced by his sire, carried away by the evil passions of his nature, soon found occasion of quarrel with his weak and defenceless brother, and with rage and malice in his heart, wreaked his vengeance upon him by taking his life. This was the first scene of war and bloodshed recorded in history.

As like causes produce like effects, the refractory will of

man continues to generate the same evil dispositions of envy and hatred towards his fellow creatures, and war and bloodshed have, from the first ages of the world, devastated the fairest portions of the habitable globe. Hence, also, has resulted slavery; which, amongst all nations, and in all ages, has been a certain concomitant of war. In former times, the destruction of human life in the battles of the warrior, was terrible; quarter was seldom given, and of the defeated party, all that could be overtaken were put to the sword—men, women and children often suffered alike, whether in the army or the field. When the battle was over, and the indiscriminate waste of life was stayed, the survivors of these sanguinary combats were not, as in the present age, made prisoners of war, to be released on certain conditions, and restored to their families and friends, but were carried away captives into the enemy's country; in other words, they were made slaves, subject to the uncontrolled domination of their captors, and liable to be bought and sold in the market as any other merchandize.

Such it is alleged was the condition of the unfortunate natives of Africa who were first introduced into this country—they were already slaves, and only brought here to replace the equally unfortunate natives of South America, who, unable to endure the miseries of abject servitude into which they had been reduced by their inhuman conquerors, were so diminished in numbers, that their avaricious oppressors were in want of labourers to cultivate their fields, or work the mines, from which were produced unheard of stores of ill-gotten wealth. This was more particularly the case in South America, which having been the first part of the "New World" discovered, was also the first into which Negro slavery was introduced by the short-sighted, but benevolent priest, Las Casas,\* who

\* In the *Encyclopedia Americana*, article Slavery, page 434, speaking of this charge against Las Casas, it is said,—“But this story has been contradicted by the Abbe Gregoire, in his ‘*Apologie de B. de las Casas*,’ in the memoirs of the French Institute, also by the writer of the article ‘*Casas*,’ in the ‘*Biographie Universelle*,’ who, after an examination of all the Spanish historians of that period, says “This charge rests



seeing the miserable condition of the unfortunate Indians, and the great waste of life amongst them, in consequence of the severity of their labours, in order to relieve them from their sufferings, encouraged the importation of a few negroes from Africa, who being stronger and more robust than the native Indians, were better able to endure hardships. These advantages, together with the increasing demand for fresh labourers, soon led to the introduction of those poor creatures in considerable numbers.

Although slaves had been imported into the Havana as early as 1510, the trade was not formally established by the King of Spain—Charles V.—until 1517. The Portuguese were also engaged in the transportation of slaves into the dominions of other nations, and, by some, are allowed to have been the first of the Europeans who were guilty of enslaving the poor Africans. The trade was recognized by the French under Louis XIII., and by the English, under Queen Elizabeth, in 1562. The first account we have of the introduction of slaves into North America, was in the colony of Virginia, which was settled by freemen in 1607, although slavery does not appear to have been known amongst the planters until 1620, when it is stated that a Dutch man-of-war landed twenty negroes for sale. From that time, slavery appears to have taken root, and spread rapidly, not only in Virginia, but throughout the other colonies, of Delaware, Maryland, North and South Carolina, &c., as they were successively settled. Pennsylvania was settled in 1682, and although the first settlers in that province were principally members of the religious Society of Friends, they followed the evil example set by the older colonies, and slavery became the custom of the country.

But from the earliest period, after the introduction of slaves solely on Herrera, an elegant but inaccurate author.” In Prescott’s History of Mexico, is a note where this charge is reiterated, but which also states “that even if he had advised such a measure, he afterwards expressed deep regret and humiliation for such erroneous views, and frankly declared ‘that the same law applies equally to the negro as to the Indian.’”

into this country, there were not wanting enlightened Christians of different denominations, who testified against the cruelty and iniquity of holding their fellow beings in slavery. The religious Society of Friends—although as has been said, contaminated with this all-pervading vice of the community—were unquestionably amongst the earliest to discover its incompatibility with that religion which teaches its followers to “do unto others, as they would be done unto,” and as a body to denounce the practice. And as they have, either individually or collectively, been identified with almost every movement tending to the abolition of the slave-trade and of slavery, and to the amelioration and improvement of the condition of the African race, it seems necessary in reviewing the rise and progress of an institution which they were chiefly instrumental in establishing, briefly to advert to the operations of that body of professing Christians. This is not done, however, with any invidious design of lauding them, as the only true friends of the coloured man, to the exclusion of others who have the merit of participating in that grand work of philanthropy,—the abolition of slavery. On the contrary, it will be seen that although the Friends at first laboured principally amongst their own members, (over whom they held the scriptural authority of Church discipline) to induce them to liberate their slaves, they were actively engaged in pleading the cause of the oppressed, with slaveholders of other religious denominations; many of whom they succeeded in convincing of the iniquity of holding mankind as slaves. Neither were they backward in uniting with others, in carrying on still further the noble enterprise they had began and so nearly achieved, within the pale of their own religious society.

The work of reformation acting on a large scale, is an instructive lesson to contemplate. When a nation has for a long period been subject to the exercise of despotic power, and sunk in ignorance and vice, a corresponding term seems necessary for the people, even under a milder government, to become fitted for the enjoyment of the privileges to which

they aspire. So when custom has long sanctioned any flagrant and palpable error, which becomes embodied in what we call "public opinion," many years frequently elapse before the bad effects of the evil to which the people had been addicted, can be entirely dissipated. So it was with "Friends" in their progress from the holding of slaves to the full display of their testimony against members of the Society being in any wise concerned in slaveholding. We see that their first official act was merely a minute of advice, sent by the Yearly Meeting in 1696, cautioning Friends against encouraging the bringing in any more negroes, and to be careful of such as they already had, in relation to their religious and moral training. In 1743 an annual Query was instituted, which was improved upon in 1755, enquiring whether their members were clear of importing or buying slaves. In 1758, those who persisted in disobeying the advice of the Yearly Meeting upon this subject, were not allowed to sit in Meetings of Discipline, or to be employed in the affairs of the Society—and no contributions were to be received from them towards the relief of the poor, or for other services of the Society. In 1776, all who continued to hold slaves over lawful age, were to be dealt with and disowned. And yet, it was not until 1781, that the records show the Society to have become entirely clear of holding slaves.

As an effect of these operations of the Society, together with the public and private labours of individuals, all their own slaves were liberated, and great numbers of their fellow citizens of other religious societies, were convinced of the justice and policy of emancipation, many of whom united heartily with Friends in carrying on and spreading far and wide the benevolent work. Hundreds and thousands of the lately enthralled of the African race, were thus added to the class of freemen, rejoicing in the civil and religious liberty for which they were originally designed by their beneficent Creator to enjoy. These newly emancipated slaves were objects of hatred and envy to a certain class of the community, who, prompted by

avarice, clandestinely seized these poor creatures, and reduced them again into slavery. Kidnapping of free negroes became frequent, and slaves who had been manumitted to be free at a subsequent period, were often surreptitiously deprived of their just rights, and detained in bondage. In such cases, ignorance or inability to prosecute their claim to freedom, unable to plead for themselves, and, perhaps, none to plead for them, their chance for redress was very uncertain. Funds also were requisite, of which they were destitute; legal characters in general were not over forward in pleading for them before magistrates. "*They were only negroes*"—poor and despised—their cause unpopular, and nothing to be gained by advocating their rights, but the ill-will and malice of their surrounding enemies.

Such were the difficulties which surrounded these unfortunate sons of Africa, on their first entrance upon the rights and privileges of freedom; which, however justly and legally entitled to, they seemed doomed to hold by a precarious tenure. Many were the pretexts set up by avaricious and unprincipled persons, to the labour and service of coloured people who had been emancipated from slavery. So numerous had such cases become, that many benevolent individuals whose sense of justice prompted them to interfere, found the labour too onerous to be borne. This led to the formation of the first association of philanthropists on behalf of the coloured people; a number of such characters combined together to support each other, and to divide the labour of defending those who were either kidnapped or otherwise deprived of their liberty.

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## CHAPTER II.

THE first notice we find upon record of associated action, was a meeting of a few individuals at the Sun Tavern, in Second street, in Philadelphia, April 14, 1775, at which

time they adopted a Constitution, the Preamble of which sets forth the objects for which the Society was formed; to wit:

“Whereas, there are in this and the neighbouring states a number of negroes and others kept in a state of slavery, who, we apprehend, from different causes and circumstances, are justly entitled to their freedom by the laws and Constitution under which we live, could their particular cases be candidly and openly debated, and evidence to the best advantage for them produced; but as in their situation, they being tied by the strong cords of oppression, are rendered incapable of asserting their freedom, and many through this inability remain unjustly in bondage during life;—it therefore has appeared necessary that some aid should be extended towards such poor unhappy sufferers, wherever they may be discovered, either in this city or its neighbourhood; and as loosing the bonds of wickedness, and setting the oppressed free, is evidently a duty incumbent on all the professors of Christianity, but more especially at a time when justice, liberty, and the laws of the land are the general topics, among most ranks and stations of men.

“Therefore being desirous as much as in us lies to contribute towards obtaining relief for all such as are kept thus unjustly in thralldom, we have agreed to inspect and take charge of all the particular cases which may hereafter come to our knowledge; and that our good intentions may operate the more successfully, and be of general utility to such as stand in need of our assistance, have judged it expedient to form ourselves into a regular society, by the name of “The Society for the Relief of Free Negroes, unlawfully held in Bondage.”

The Society proceeded to the election of officers, and chose John Baldwin, President; Samuel Davis, Treasurer; and Thomas Harrison, Secretary. They also appointed at the first meeting a Standing Committee of Inspection, consisting of six members, who had forthwith a number of cases committed to their care. Their Reports from time to time manifest a lively interest in the concern, and a good degree of success



in rescuing many of the unfortunate objects of their care from the avaricious grasp of their claimants.

The Society met four times in the course of the year, the last of which meetings was held in the 11th month, 1775. After transacting the usual business, they adjourned to meet at the same place in the 2d month of the following year, 1776. About that time, however, the difficulties between this country and Great Britain, which preceded the Revolution, had resulted in the war, in consequence of which no further meetings of the Society took place until it was over. The next meeting occurred in the 2d month, 1784. The opening minute explains the occasion of the interregnum, by stating, "The national commotions that have prevailed for several years, are the only reasons why the company have not met according to the rules."<sup>\*</sup>

Although, as has been stated, the meetings of the Society were suspended for several years during the war, we have

<sup>\*</sup>Perhaps a more explicit reason for this suspension of the public labours of the Society, may be derived from the fact, that the members of that little association were also mostly, or perhaps all of them, members of the religious Society of Friends, who, from their peculiar tenets, particularly their testimony against War, could not participate in the forcible opposition of their fellow-citizens to the Government of England, under which they were then living; on which account they were, in many instances, closely tried with persecution, and much individual suffering was endured. A number of very valuable Friends, who were amongst the most respectable and influential members of the community, were suddenly arrested, and without being permitted to see their wives or families, or make any preparation for leaving their business, banished from the city, and carried away into the interior of Virginia, where they were confined for some time—and one or more died there. On account of the obloquy thus cast upon them, Friends were necessarily obliged to avoid as much as possible mixing in public affairs. This may also serve to account for their not appearing to have been ostensibly engaged in promoting the passage of the Act of Assembly, for the gradual abolition of slavery in this State, which took place in 1780, at which time their enemies were numerous, and many of them slaveholders, who hated the Quakers because they were abolitionists.



reason to believe, (although there is no recorded testimony of their proceedings,) that the Society by its influential members was very active, not only in accordance with the Constitution, which specified the objects of the association to be the protection of free negroes against the illegal claims that were set up against them, but also in promoting the gradual abolition of slavery and the slave trade.

It may be proper here to take a brief notice of some of the distinguished individuals whose early labours on behalf of the enslaved Africans, entitle them to a place in any history relating to the abolition of slavery.

Clarkson, in his history of the abolition of the slave trade, says, whilst the Quakers were making exertions at their Yearly Meetings in America, as a religious body, to get rid of both the commerce and slavery of their fellow creatures, others of the same profession were acting as individuals, independently of any influence from their religious communion, in the same cause. Some of these he briefly notices. The first mentioned is without date, Wm. Burling, of Long Island. He bore a faithful testimony against slavery at their Yearly Meeting, and continued annually to raise his voice against it. He next speaks of Ralph Sandiford, as very earnest in endeavouring to prevail upon his friends, both in and out of the Society, to liberate their slaves. In 1729 he published a work called "the Mystery of Iniquity," which T. C. says was a valuable appeal on behalf of the African cause. "The next public advocate was Benjamin Lay. In 1737 he published a treatise on slave-keeping, which he gave away, particularly among young people. He had lived in the Island of Barbadoes, and witnessed there scenes of cruelty towards the slaves, which had greatly disturbed his mind, and unhinged it, as it were, whenever the subject of their sufferings was brought before him."

In 1746 a distinguished advocate for the slave, appeared in the person of John Woolman, who published a treatise on slavery in 1750. He travelled extensively in the Slave States, as a Minister of the Gospel, in the course of which he con-

versed a great deal with Friends and those of other Societies, bearing a faithful testimony against the wickedness and impolicy of slaveholding."

About the same time, the celebrated philanthropist, Anthony Benezet, is said to have "begun to be deeply affected with the iniquity of the slave trade, the unlawfulness of carrying negroes into captivity, and the cruelty which was exercised by those who purchased and employed them. The impulse of duty, then for the first time brought him from the retirement of private life before the world, to lift up his voice in behalf of an oppressed and wretched portion of his fellow beings."—"He commenced his benevolent labours for the blacks (as his worthy biographer, Roberts Vaux, says) by adopting the most rational course which could have been devised for their benefit, the establishment of an evening school, which he taught gratuitously himself. In this charitable work, he was successful beyond his own expectations, for the proficiency of his pupils in the rudiments of learning, added to the moral and religious advancement of many of them under his pious care, powerfully contributed to recommend the race to the notice, and the cause of their sufferings to the investigation of many persons of influence, who had previously held both in contempt. Having thus awakened observation and reflection in Philadelphia, and in some measure removed the unjustifiable prejudice against the negroes, he was prepared to make an appeal in their behalf to the justice and clemency of communities and nations. His first attempts to enlighten the public mind, were made by composing and circulating through the medium of Almanacks and the public papers, detached pieces concerning the unlawfulness of slavery," &c.; after which he wrote and published several essays on the slave trade. One of which, entitled, "An Historical Account of Guinea," &c., accidentally falling into the hands of Thomas Clarkson, was the means of giving an impulse to the mind of that indefatigable and benevolent individual, whose exertions subsequently contributed so much towards bringing about the abolition of the slave trade by the British Parliament; simultaneously with which event, the

American Congress interdicted the trade, declaring it to be piracy to be anywise concerned therein.

Lee's History of the Methodists, states as follows, to wit:

1784. Dr. Cook and Bishop Asbury presiding. Rules were adopted respecting slavery. "Every member in our Society who has slaves in those States where the law will admit of freeing them, shall, after notice given him by the preacher, set them free, within twelve months (except in Virginia, and there within two years") at specified periods according to age. "Every person concerned, who will not comply with these rules, shall have liberty to withdraw within twelve months after the notice given;" "otherwise, to be excluded." And "no person holding slaves, shall in future be admitted into the Society until he previously comply with these rules respecting slavery."

These, it is to be presumed, are the Rules which were so severely attacked at a subsequent conference held in Virginia, and which were upheld, for a time only, by the firmness of Dr. Coke. But which were finally suspended at the next conference. Dr. Coke was ordained by John Wesley, as the first Bishop or Superintendant of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. He was a very decided and zealous advocate for the rights of the slave, and his biography, particularly that part which relates to this subject, is very interesting. In one place it states, "when this obnoxious subject was omitted, he was caressed, and received with all the veneration and respect which a delegate from Heaven could claim; but on other occasions when this fatal chord was touched, it instantly vibrated discord through the congregation, and applause gave place to execrations. In some places the members of the Society were disgusted, and many withdrew." While he was preaching in a barn in Virginia, on Sunday, the subject was introduced; much provocation was felt by some of the congregation, who withdrew and prepared to offer him personal violence, stimulated by a fashionable lady, who offered the mob fifty pounds, in case they would seize the preacher and give him one hundred lashes. On leaving the house, he was instantly surrounded by

a ferocious party, who were proceeding to put their threats into execution, but he was rescued by a Magistrate, and escaped in safety.

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### CHAPTER III.

The zeal and energy with which Friends advocated the cause of the oppressed Africans, aroused the convictions of others out of the limits of their Society, and emancipations greatly increased. The number of free blacks liable to be kidnapped, or otherwise deprived of their newly acquired liberty, gave occasion, as has been before stated, for the first organization of a society for the protection of their rights. Notwithstanding the obloquy thrown first upon the Society by their enemies, circumstances were then transpiring in the political arena of this country, the occurrence of which tended rapidly to change public opinion in their favour. The principles of civil liberty were at that time engaging general attention; and the discussion of the rights of man paved the way for more liberal views in relation to the blacks. The people who were so tenacious of their own rights, as to refuse submission to a law imposing a light tax upon them, because they had no voice in the Parliament by which it had been enacted, were easily convinced of the still greater wrong done to the poor African, by taxing him to the whole amount of his earnings, without any compensation; and with the addition of severe personal injuries at the will of his master: all of which were to be entailed upon his posterity in perpetuity, without being allowed even the privilege of murmur or remonstrance. Intelligent and sensible men could not fail at that time to see the gross inconsistency of such a state of things, not only with Christianity, but with the plainest principles of civil liberty. Many of the brilliant characters who subsequently were con-

cerned in the achievement of the Independence of the Thirteen United States of America, became decided and zealous advocates of the equal rights of all men (whether white or black) to the unrestrained enjoyment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Such were the characters upon whom the influential Friends, who formed the original "Society for the Protection of Free Blacks," had to operate, during the interregnum in their associated action, in the time of the revolutionary war. Although we have not been able to find any thing upon record, to show how the labours of Friends and their co-labourers of other denominations were directed for promoting the objects of their association, during that time, we are not therefore to conclude that they were idle. Events of great moment never occur without the intervention of adequate means; and as we have seen the progress made by Friends in clearing their own religious society of slavery, and in convincing many others of the sinfulness of slaveholding, it is reasonable to conclude that the members of that Society were the chief instigators of those measures which led to the passage of a law of this commonwealth, providing for the gradual abolition of slavery.\* As the proceedings of the Legislature on that memorable occasion cannot fail to be interesting, we have made copious extracts from the minutes of the Assembly, from the first introduction of the bill to its final enactment into a law, together with the yeas and nays taken on its second and third reading. To wit:

*Nov. 3, 1779.*—On motion made and seconded, *Resolved*, that a bill be brought in for the gradual abolition of slavery. George Bryan, Joseph McClean, and David Thomas were appointed a Committee for that purpose.

\* In the *Memoirs of the Life of A. Benezet*, published by R. Vaux, it is stated that "during the sitting of the Legislature in 1780, he had private interviews on the subject (of slavery) with every member of the government, and no doubt thus essentially contributed to the adoption of that celebrated measure." ✓



*Nov.* 8.—The committee brought in a bill, which was ordered to lay on the table.

*Nov.* 17.—The bill entitled, an Act for the gradual abolition of slavery, was read, debated, and postponed for further consideration.

*Nov.* 18.—The bill was read again, and after being debated by paragraphs, was ordered to be transcribed for third reading, and in the meantime, to be published for consideration.

On the question, whether the bill last mentioned, shall be transcribed and published, the yeas and nays were called, and by order taken as follows :

## YEAS.

George Bryan,	Arthur Watts,	Jonathan Hoge,
William Hollingshead,	Joseph Savage,	Abraham Smith,
Jacob Schriener,	David Thomas,	Samuel Culbertson,
Michael Shubart,	Henry Hays,	John Harris,
Charles W. Peale,	John Fulton,	Frederick Watt,
Robert Knox,	William Harris,	Ephraim Steele,
Joseph McClean,	Sketchly Morton,	Jonathan Jones,
Edward Heston,	John Smiley,	Peter Rhoads,
William Coats,	John Gillcreest,	John Ralston,
Joseph Blewer,	William Brownson,	John Burd,
Gerardus Wynkoop,	David Dunwoody,	Joseph Powel,
Benjamin Fell,	Matthew Dill,	Samuel Dale,
William Scott,	John Orr,	John Procter,
	Isaac Mason.	

## NAYS.

Samuel Mechlin,	Emanuel Carpenter,	David Kennedy,
Patrick Anderson,	William Porter,	Gabriel Heester,
Joseph Parke,	James Jacks,	Christian Lower,
James Anderson,	William Brown, jr.	Christopher Wagner,
Christopher Kucker,	John Whitehill,	Simon Dresbach,
James Cunningham,	James Dickson,	William Montgomery.

*Feb.* 15, 1780\*.—Agreeably to the order of the day pre-

\*Four several petitions signed by divers inhabitants, freemen of this commonwealth, were presented, expressing approbation of the bill for the gradual abolition of slavery, and praying the same may be passed into a law. Three petitions were also presented in opposition, one of which, signed by some of the citizens of Lancaster, was dismissed on account of its indecency.



viously agreed upon, the House went into the third reading of the bill, entitled an " Act for the gradual abolition of slavery," and the same being again debated by paragraphs, was ordered to be engrossed, and on the first of March, being again taken up and compared at the table, was enacted into a law, and the Speaker directed to sign it. The yeas and nays on its final passage being required, were ordered, and taken as follows, to wit :

## YEAS.

George Bryan,	William Scott,	Jonathan Hoge,
William Hollingshead,	Joseph Savage,	Abraham Smith,
Jacob Schriener,	David Thomas,	John Harris,
Michael Shubart,	Henry Hayes,	Frederick Watts,
Charles W. Peale,	John Fulton,	Ephraim Steel,
Robert Knox,	John Smilie,	Jonathan Jones,
Joseph McClean,	John Gillereest,	Peter Rhoads,
Edward Heston,	William Brown, sen.,	John Ralston,
William Coats,	David Dunwoody,	John Burd,
Gerardus Wynkoop,	Matthew Dill,	Joseph Powel,
Benjamin Fell,	John Orr,	Samuel Dale,
	William Montgomery.	

## NAYS.

Daniel Heester,	James Cunningham,	Christian Lower,
Samuel Mechlin,	William Porter,	Christopher Wagner,
Joseph Blewer,	William Brown, jr.,	John Van Campen,
James Boyd,	John Whitehill,	Simon Dresbach,
Patrick Anderson,	James Dickson,	Robert Martin,
James Anderson,	David Kennedy,	John Procter,
Christopher Kucker,	Valentine Eckert,	Isaac Procter.

Thus was accomplished by a large majority, one of the most important acts of legislation ever enacted in this commonwealth, or perhaps in any other. One which for justice, humanity, and philanthropy, has seldom been equalled, and which raised the State of Pennsylvania to a high position amongst the nations of the earth.

Those who voted in the negative, on the final passage of the bill, entered their protest against the law. And as it exhibits the train of reasoning amongst the slaveholders, and pro-

slavery men of that day, and shows conclusively the ideas entertained, even by the enemies of the coloured people, of the rights and privileges of citizenship, which the law would confer upon them, we quote the protest as recorded on the minutes of the Assembly; to wit:

“*1st.* Because, although we are the Representatives of a free State, and accountable to no other for our proceedings, as far as regards our internal police; yet as we are confederated with other States, for our common exertion and defence, we are of opinion, that in adopting a measure to which some of them cannot in their present invaded condition (with its attendant calamities) conform, we should be highly censurable, as regardless of the safety of our neighbours, even supposing that it could not injure ourselves: but when we consider, that the pernicious consequences which such a measure may draw on any State or States in the Union, tend to weaken that body, of which this State is a member, and indirectly to involve this State in difficulties which we think we should have to answer for to our constituents; we must consider it as a step inapudent, premature, and for which we have no instructions from them.

“*2d.* Because, notwithstanding, we approve and are sensible of the humanity and justice of manumitting slaves in time of peace; we cannot think this the proper time,\* since the seat of war is likely to be transferred to the southward; and to all appearance, the force of that country may be called out, when the white inhabitants will be obliged to leave their families, and all that is near and dear to them, at the mercy of a superior force of slaves, which may, from the sound of freedom that may go forth from this law, (perhaps unattended with every circumstance) lead the negroes of these States to a demand of an immediate and entire freedom, or to other disorders, that may end in the greatest cruelties, which an ignorant, and perhaps desperate people, stimulated by the enemies of their masters, can be capable of committing.

\* It is hard for the oppressor to find the “proper time” for liberating the slave.

“ 3d. Because, if the time were come when slaves might be safely emancipated, we could not agree to their being made free citizens in so extensive a manner as this law proposes ; we think they would have been well satisfied, and the Legislature would have sufficiently answered their humane purposes, had these unhappy people been enabled to enjoy the fruits of their labour, and have been protected in their lives and property, in the manner white persons are, without giving them the right of voting for, and being voted into offices, inter-marrying with white persons, confronting them with their masters, and being witnesses in every respect during the limited time of their servitude, which we fear in some instances may ruin families. We think that future Legislatures, might have added to their privileges in proportion as they would have found them more civilized and better qualified to receive them, with much more propriety, than they could abridge them should they be found too extensive after being fixed by a fundamental law.

4th. Because, the motion for postponing the comparing of this bill till the next session of Assembly, and a motion for the previous question on the passing of this Bill, were overruled ; as both these motions were only intended to gain more time for knowing the sentiments of our constituents, and to know whether a change of circumstances might not then enable us to vote for the bill.

Samuel Culbertson,  
James Dickson,  
John Van Campen,  
Christopher Kucker,  
William Brown, jr.  
James Boyd,  
Joseph Park,

Robert Martin,  
James Cunningham,  
John Whitehill,  
Valentine Eckert,  
Samuel Meehlin,  
David Kennedy,  
John Procter,

Joseph Blewer,  
Daniel Heester, jr.,  
James Anderson,  
Christian Lower,  
Christopher Wagner,  
William Porter,  
James Jack,

Patrick Anderson,

Isaac Meason.

## CHAPTER IV.

As has been previously stated, "the Society for the protection of the free blacks" was not convened again until the war was over and peace fully established. The first minutes (before quoted) are dated in the Second month, 1784. After some preliminaries for resuscitating the Society, they adjourned to meet again at Friends' committee room on Fourth street below Chestnut.

*Fourth month, 1784*\*.—A new election took place, and Thomas Meredith was chosen President, John Todd, Secretary, and James Starr, Treasurer. A new appointment was also made of a standing committee, who were desired to take "the Book of Articles" and to have them signed by those who were absent. Thomas Meredith subsequently resigned as a member, and Samuel Richards being proposed in the Fifth month, was ballotted for and duly elected the second President.

It appears that a practice at that time prevailed of binding free negroes in their minority to the age of 28 years, which the Society considered illegal; a special appointment of three members was made to unite with the Standing Committee, to enquire respecting the Premise, and take such Council therein as should be found expedient.

*Fifth month, 1785.* The annual election for officers, &c. occurred.

James Whiteall was chosen President; John Todd, Secretary; James Starr, Treasurer.

\*Present at this meeting T. Harrison, Jas. Starr, Wm. Lippincott, Jno. Thomas, Benj. Horner, Saml. Richards, Jno. Evans, Lambert Wilmore, Jno. Todd, Jas. Whiteall, Edw. Brooks, Thos. Armit, Jno. Warner, Danl. Sidrick, Thos. Barton, Robt. Evans, Benj. Miers, Thos. Meredith, Robt. Wood, John Eldridge.

The minutes show that a great many cases constantly engaged the attention of the Society, and the Standing Committee had much need of legal advice, which was generously given whenever needed.

*Fifth mo.* 1786. Jonathan Penrose was elected President ; Thomas Harrison, Secretary ; James Starr, Treasurer.

The following paragraph appears on the minutes, to wit :

“The Society remembering the many instances in which William Lewis, Attorney at Law, had generously rendered assistance to the Society since its establishment, and being disposed to acknowledge their gratitude, therefore agreed to have a piece of plate prepared, with a motto placed thereon descriptive of the intentions of the Society.” A Committee\* was appointed to have it prepared, and when completed to present it to him.

The Committee procured a three pint silver can, with an appropriate motto, (of which, however, there is no copy) and presented it to William Lewis, which he accepted as a mark of respect from the Society, but not as a gratuity for services rendered, for which he declared his determination never to receive a pecuniary reward.

The minutes state, “That great inconvenience hath arisen to negroes bound by Indentures and assignable, in that they are often transferred out of the Government, (State,) by which means they lose the benefit of the law.” The subject was referred to the Standing Committee.

During this and the preceding year, several prominent Friends, and some of other Societies, were elected members ; only two of whom are living *at this* time (1845.)

The Society appears to have been for several years gaining in public estimation. In addition to the many valuable Friends, who had been long actively engaged in its arduous concerns, we find a considerable number of others, desirous of being enrolled amongst the Abolitionists, a term of reproach

\* Francis Baily, Jon. Penrose, Norris Jones, and Thomas Harrison.



amongst the slaveholders, but deemed honourable and worthy of being sought after by the greatest and most dignified characters in this community. In proof of which we find upon the minutes of the 2d, 3d and 4th months of this year, an array of 36 names of candidates for election.

1787. At the meeting of the Society, in 3d mo. a Committee\* was appointed to revise the Constitution, and make such alterations, additions and amendments as they should find necessary. In the 4th mo. they reported a draught—which was read and approved. “On motion, it was *Resolved* : That the first business of the next meeting shall be the balloting for the persons on the minutes as candidates, and then to proceed to the election of officers, &c., under the new Constitution.”

At that time the practice prevailed in this city, as it yet does in the slaveholding States, of advertising negro slaves for sale. The Society taking the odious custom into consideration, appointed a committee to wait on the printers of the different newspapers, and request them to decline the publication of such advertisements; which appears to have been complied with, as the practice has long since been generally abandoned.

At the meeting held 4th mo. there were present 45 members. The Society proceeded to ballot for the candidates proposed, and the whole number of 36 were elected. Amongst them were some of the most distinguished members of the Society of Friends, who, though careful to maintain the doctrines and practices peculiar to their own religious persuasion, were not afraid of contamination, by uniting with benevolent minded individuals, let their belief as to religion be what it might, provided they were willing to assist them in promoting the abolition of slavery.

As proof of this liberality of sentiment and of practice, we find on the list of candidates now elected, the names of a num-

\* John Penrose, Tench Cox, Wm. Jackson, Dr. Rush and Thomas Harrison.



ber who were not of the Society of Friends, but rather opposed to them—some of other religious professions, and some of no particular religion—as for instance, Benjamin and Temple Franklin, the Rev. John Andrews, Richard Peters, and Thomas Paine.\* These individuals are not mentioned with any invidious design, but to show how decidedly catholic the genuine spirit of liberty makes men: intolerance of opinion vanishes before it. The bigot, like the priest and the Levite in the parable of our blessed Lord, may pass by on the other side; but the real philanthropist, the good Samaritan, knows no distinction of nation, sect or colour. The suffering, the dumb, and oppressed, of whatever class, are his brethren; to apply relief is his joy, and to assist others in doing good, a constant source of happiness.

The new Constitution was again read over, and explanations given as to the objects and purposes of the Society, which now assumed the name and title of “The Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, the Relief of Free Negroes unlawfully held in Bondage, and for Improving the Condition of the African Race;” it was adopted, and the following officers were elected, to wit:

*President*—Benjamin Franklin.

*Vice Presidents*—James Pemberton, Jonathan Penrose.

*Secretaries*—Benjamin Rush and Tench Cox.

*Treasurer*—James Starr.

*Counsellors*—William Lewis, John D. Cox, Miers Fisher, William Rawle.

The Preamble to the Constitution of the Society, which

\* Perhaps it might be proper to remark, that the latter individual, who subsequently acquired an unenviable notoriety as an infidel writer, was only known at this time as a patriot and lover of equal rights to all men, his peculiar principles in regard to theology not having been publicly known, as they were subsequently developed during his residence in France, where, in the time of the Revolution, he made the public avowal of his sentiments by the publication of his most obnoxious work, “The Age of Reason.”

was now adopted, contains such a clear exposition of its fundamental principles, as to be deemed worthy of a place in any historical notice of this character. It is as follows; to wit:

“It having pleased the Creator of the world, to make of one flesh all the children of men, it becomes them to consult and promote each other’s happiness, as members of the same family, however diversified they may be, by colour, situation, religion, or different states of society. It is more especially the duty of those persons, who profess to maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who acknowledge the obligations of Christianity, to use such means as are in their power, to extend the blessings of freedom to every part of the human race; and in a more particular manner, to such of their fellow creatures as are entitled to freedom by the laws and constitutions of any of the United States, and who, notwithstanding, are detained in bondage, by fraud or violence.—From a full conviction of the truth and obligation of these principles,—from a desire to diffuse them, wherever the miseries and vices of slavery exist, and in humble confidence of the favour and support of the Father of Mankind, the subscribers have associated themselves, under the title of the ‘*Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of free Negroes unlawfully held in Bondage, and for improving the condition of the African race.*’ ”

The Secretaries were directed to have one thousand copies of the Constitution printed, together with the names of the officers of the Society, and the acts of the Legislature of Pennsylvania for the gradual abolition of slavery. They were also to prepare letters to be sent to each of the Governors of the United States, with a copy of the Constitution and Laws, and a copy of Clarkson’s *Essay on the Commerce and Slavery of the Africans*. The Secretaries were also directed to write letters to the Society in New York for the relief of free negroes, &c.—to Thomas Clarkson and Dr. Price, of London, and to the Abbe Raynall, in France.

A Memorial to the Convention about to assemble in this

city to alter the Constitution of the United States on the subject of the slave trade, was also prepared, and directed to be signed by one of the Vice Presidents, and handed to the President of this Society, who was a member of the Convention, with a request that he would present the same.

A letter from the Committee for abolishing the African (slave) trade, recently instituted in London (July 17, 1787), signed by Samuel Hoare, Jr., was read to the Society, containing the most friendly assurances of respect, and co-operation with the Pennsylvania Society; and requesting a communication of such facts as are known in America respecting the treatment or manumission of slaves. At this time the Pennsylvania Society had been organized about twelve years; and in their answer to the London Society, in reply to the first question, they state: "Respecting the treatment of slaves, we can say but little from our own personal observations, inasmuch as the progress of truth and humanity has in some degree extirpated negro slavery from amongst us; but we have no doubt of the truth of the numerous histories which have been published of the cruel treatment and sufferings of slaves in the Southern States and in the West Indies." In respect to the conduct of such as have been set free, they affirm, that their behaviour in general has been *more* orderly than that of the same class of white people."

The dignified standing of the Pennsylvania Society at that time is further exemplified by the general tone of their communication to the London Society. They say, "To encourage your Society in your present laudable exertions, we beg leave to lay before you the following facts relative to the progress of the principles of humanity and justice upon the subject of the commerce and slavery of negroes in this country. About thirty years ago, a few well disposed men published several tracts upon this subject. These tracts met with great and general opposition. The controversies produced by them contributed to excite the attention of the public to the claims of the Africans, and thereby increase the number of their advocates in the Middle and Eastern Provinces of America. From

hence originated the laws in several of them, for imposing such duties upon slaves, as amounted to a prohibition of the importation of them. From the influence of these publications arose also that law in Pennsylvania for the gradual abolition of slavery.”

One other paragraph from that interesting letter may be quoted, as showing the high aspirations with which they viewed the approach of that period when the oppressions of the poor slave should cease from the land.

“We look forward with pleasure to the time, when the records of modern times shall be examined with critical exactness, to know whether the souls and bodies of men were ever the objects of commerce. Whether our laws punished the stealing of a piece of plate, or a few shillings (worth) with death, and at the same time conferred upon the receiver of stolen slaves the honours of a nation. And whether it was possible for men to acknowledge the principles of human nature, and the obligations of Christianity, and yet inflict upon their fellow-creatures the oppressions and punishments which are connected with negro slavery in the West Indies and the Southern States.”

An account was also forwarded to the London Society of two black men, of very remarkable capacities, prepared by Dr. B. Rush, which may probably be found amongst his works. One of them, named James Derham, was a practitioner of medicine, belonging to the Spanish settlement of New Orleans, on the Mississippi, a slave, sold from one person to another, sometimes employed by medical men in menial services in their shops, and finally, under the instructions of one of his masters, who was a regular physician, became well qualified for practice. He was set free, and attained to considerable eminence. The other was a slave, named Thomas Tuller, of seventy years of age, living at Alexandria, Va., who possessed a remarkable talent for arithmetical calculation. He is a native African, and can neither read nor write. He was visited by William Hartshorn and Samuel Coates, of this city, and gave correct answers to all their questions—such as

how many seconds there are in a year and a half? In two minutes he answered, 47,304,000. How many seconds in seventy years, seventeen days, twelve hours? In one minute and a half, 2,110,500,800. He multiplied nine figures by nine, &c. &c.

It is but justice to the memory of those valuable men, Benjamin Rush and Tench Cox, to say, that the letter from which these extracts have been taken, was prepared by them as the acting Secretaries of the Society, the rise and progress of which it is the object of this memoir to portray. These allusions are made for the satisfaction and encouragement of the present race of philanthropists, in order, by the picture here exhibited of the success of the cause they love while in the hands of their worthy predecessors, to stimulate them to more animated and steady exertions to carry it on, until their lofty hopes shall be fully realized.

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## CHAPTER V.

It appears that vessels still continued to be fitted out for the slave trade as late as 1788. The subject had engaged the attention of the Society in the preceding year, and a Committee\* appointed to devise a plan for preventing it. They reported "that it would be expedient to apply to the Assembly for a supplementary law, for this and other objects that it may be found necessary to recommend to the attention of the legislature, more effectually to put a stop to the African slave trade being carried on, directly or indirectly, in the State of Pennsylvania. "A petition to the Assembly in accordance with this report was prepared, and being approved at a subsequent

\* The Committee were: Dr. B. Rush, Caleb Lownes, James Pemberton, Dr. S. P. Griffiths, John Olden, John Todd, Junr., Tench Cox, Jno. Kaighn and Wm. Rogers.



meeting, a Committee of twenty-four\* respectable and influential members was appointed to have one hundred copies printed for general circulation. About two thousand signatures were obtained to the petitions, which were presented to the Assembly, where they were read and referred to a Special Committee of the House, who reported at considerable length, that the grievances complained of were facts, and a very efficient supplement to the law of 1780 was passed.

About this time news arrived that a number of our white fellow citizens had been taken prisoners by the Turkish gallies, and sold into captivity under the Algerine government. This affecting intelligence coming under the consideration of the Society, was deemed a legitimate subject for their attention. A committee† was appointed to enquire into the facts, who in their Report recommend that measures be immediately taken to obtain information of the late places of abode—the names, numbers and real situation of the American citizens, now in captivity in Barbary, and that a subscription, under care of the Society, be opened in the several States for the purpose of obtaining the funds necessary to administer such relief as their situation may require and admit of.

A correspondence was directed to be opened with two societies, which were supposed to have been recently formed in the State of Delaware in relation to the slave-trade, and to request their co-operation with this Society in pursuing their common object.

1788. At a meeting of the Society, Tenth month, information was received from the State of Rhode Island, that, in open defiance of the laws of that State, some persons there were fit-

\* The Committee were:—Dr. S. P. Griffiths, Dr. Say, T. Parker, Robert Wain, Sam. Pancoast, Jr., Thomas Savery, Robert Taggart, Jno. Poultney, Wm. Zane, Joseph Moore, Joseph Budd, Wm. McIlhenny, Sam. Baker, Caleb Lownes, Jonathan Willis, Richard Jones, Ellis Yarnall, Robert Evans, Thomas Harrison, Thomas Amott, Philip Benezett, Samuel Enlen, Jr., and Jacob Shoemaker, Jr.

† Committee: Richard Wells, Francis Baillie, Bart. Wistar, T. Harrison, Dr. S. P. Griffiths, Jno. Olden and Tench Cox.

ing out vessels for the slave-trade. Under view of the danger of such practices, it was resolved, that Richard Wells and others be a committee\* to address our corresponding members in that State on the subject, and procure their influence in opposing the further prosecution of the slave-trade there, as well as in other States.

The ardent zeal and indefatigable perseverance with which the Society laboured in the cause, was manifested by the lively and extensive correspondence kept up with kindred Societies, which were now springing up in different parts of America, in their addresses to the Governors of different States in the Union, and to legislative bodies. Also, to the Societies in England and France, to whom they speak of the extent to which the practice exists here, of petitioning the several State Legislatures, and of remonstrating against the cruelties of the system of slavery and the slave-trade, and the obvious benefits resulting therefrom, as well as from the abundant circulation of essays, tracts, and numerous publications and pictorial representations, which were constantly issuing from our own, or foreign writers, showing the utter inconsistency, injustice and impolicy of slavery. They encouraged the Societies addressed to persevere in application to governments; and advised them against too sanguine expectations of success on one hand, while on the other, they were never to be discouraged or cast down by disappointment; they were urged to extend their correspondence in relation to this subject, as far as possible amongst European nations who have colonies in which negro slaves are employed.

1789. In the Eleventh month a special meeting of the Society was convened for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of applying to the Legislature for an Act of Incorporation. After due deliberation, it was unanimously resolved, that such an application should be made. A committee\* of twelve, including James Pemberton, one of the

\*R. Wells, Jas. Pemberton, Caleb Lownes, Dr. Griffiths, John Todd, Wm. Rodgers, Francis Bailey, and Dr. B. Rush.

Vice Presidents, was appointed to present a petition for leave to bring in a bill for that object; and if allowed, also to prepare an essay of a bill for the consideration of the Society. They accordingly, having obtained leave of the House, presented before the Society an essay of such an act; and the Society aided by the Council, having approved the same, it was laid before the Assembly, which was then in session, and in due time it was enacted into a law, 8th of December, 1789.

1790. A special meeting of the Society was held in the Second month, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of addressing a memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States on the subject of the slavery of the Africans. The measure was agreed to, and a draft of such a memorial being produced, was read by paragraphs, and after some amendments adopted, and directed to be transcribed and signed by the President of the Society, and two copies transmitted, one to the Senate, and the other to the House of Representatives of the United States.

At the present day, when the Congress of the United States absolutely refuse to receive petitions from any source wherein slavery is in the remotest degree alluded to, the concluding paragraph of this memorial is particularly worthy of notice, for the strength of its diction, the extent of its demands, and for its having been approved and signed by such a high and dignified character as Benjamin Franklin, then President of the Society, for which reasons it is presented here, viz.

“From a persuasion that equal liberty was originally the portion, and is still the birthright of all men, and influenced by the strongest ties of humanity, and the principles of their institution, your memorialists conceive themselves bound to use all justifiable endeavours to loosen the bands of slavery and to promote a general enjoyment of the blessing of freedom. Under these impressions, they earnestly entreat your serious

\*Jas. Pemberton, R. Wells, Wm. Rogers, J. McCrea, Tench Cox, Nathan Boys, Dr. B. Say, Dr. Griffiths, T. Harrison, J. Procter, J. Olden, and Caleb Lowmes.

attention to the subject of slavery, that you would be pleased to countenance the restoration of liberty to those unhappy men, who alone in this land of freedom are degraded into perpetual bondage, and who amidst the general joy of surrounding freemen, are groaning in servile subjection; that you will devise means for removing this inconsistency from the character of the American people; that you will promote mercy and justice towards this distressed race, and that you will step to the very verge of the powers vested in you, for discouraging every species of traffic in the persons of our fellow men."

A systematic plan was this year, adopted and carried into operation by the appointment of "The committee for the improvement of the condition of the free negroes," composed of twenty-four members, who were to be sub-divided; to wit:

"1st. *A Committee of Inspection*, whose duty should be to superintend the morals, general conduct, and ordinary situation of the free negroes, to afford them advice and instruction, and protect them from wrongs.

2d. *A Committee of Guardians*, for placing out children with suitable persons, that they may learn some trade, or other means of subsistence by regular but reasonable apprenticeship.

3d. *A Committee of Education*, who were to superintend the school instruction of the children and youth of free blacks. This branch of the committee was also charged to procure and preserve a regular record of the marriages, births and manumissions of all free blacks.

4th. *A Committee of Employ*, who were to endeavour to procure constant employment for those free negroes who are able to work, the want of which would occasion poverty, idleness and many vicious habits." The labour of this committee proved highly beneficial to the coloured people for several years. After which some of its duties became obsolete and the committee was discontinued.

In the Sixth month, a special meeting was convened on the occasion of the death of Benjamin Franklin, the venerable President of the Society, which event was announced by

the Vice President. No provision having been introduced into the Constitution of the Society for supplying such a vacancy as had now occurred, a Committee was appointed to consider of, and, in conjunction with the Council, to propose such amendment as may be necessary to remedy that defect; which was done: and, after the amendment submitted by the Committee had been adopted, the Society proceeded to the election of a President. James Pemberton was unanimously elected.

The office of Vice President having thereby become vacant, William Rogers was subsequently elected to supply the place.

The operations and labours of the Society do not appear to have ever been limited to the State of Pennsylvania. A case is noticed on the minutes of a very interesting suit before the Supreme Court of New Jersey, the decision of which involved the liberties of a number of blacks unlawfully held in bondage. A Special Committee was appointed to assist the Counsel of the Society, in attending to the case, and, if necessary, employ other able counsel. The Court pronounced judgment in favour of the negro, in whose name the action was brought, declaring him to be a free man.

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## CHAPTER VI.

1791. In the 2d month, the Society was informed that a Bill had been introduced into the General Assembly of this State to enable officers of the United States to hold slaves in Pennsylvania. The Acting and Corresponding Committees forthwith drew up and presented to the House of Representatives a Memorial upon the subject, which, together with the Bill, had been committed by the House. The proceedings of the Committees were fully approved by the Society, and a Special Committee appointed to assist them in opposing the



progress of the bill. They subsequently reported that it had been suppressed.

At the same meeting the President, James Pemberton, communicated an invitation from the American Philosophical Society, to attend the delivery of a Eulogium to the memory of Benjamin Franklin. "Whereupon it was unanimously resolved, that this Society will testify their respect for the memory of their late worthy President by their attendance upon this solemn occasion."

In the 10th month, 1791, the Committee of Correspondence laid before the Society the draft of another Memorial to Congress, on the subject of the slave trade, which being read and carefully considered, was approved, and directed to be signed by the President; and that Committee was charged with having it presented to Congress. This memorial is remarkable as having reference to the previous action of that body, which, from its complexion, might almost be supposed attributable to the influence of the memorial of this Society in 1790. The concluding paragraphs read thus:

"The object of the present application is to entreat you to consider of some method speedily to put into effect the two following resolves, agreed to by the Committee of the Whole House, and entered on your Journals in March, 1790.

"1st. That Congress have authority to restrain the citizens of the United States from carrying on the African trade for the purpose of supplying foreigners with slaves; and of providing by proper regulations for the humane treatment during their passage, of slaves imported by said citizens, into the states admitting such importations."

"2d. That Congress have also authority to prohibit foreigners from fitting out vessels in any port of the United States, for transporting persons from Africa to any foreign port."

At a subsequent meeting of the Society it was reported, that the memorial last agreed upon, together with others of a similar character, upon the same subject, from the Abolition Societies of Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Washington in Pennsylvania, Baltimore, and Virginia, and two Socie-

ties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, "had all been presented to the House by the Speaker, and were referred to a Select Committee."

1792. A Committee was appointed to take measures for the establishment of an Abolition Society in New Jersey. They subsequently reported that they had succeeded in procuring the formation of a Society at Burlington, called the "New Jersey Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery."

1793. *First month.* The Society was informed by the Committee of Correspondence that a petition had been presented to the Legislature of this state, by the French emigrants from the West Indies, praying for an alteration in the law for the gradual abolition of slavery; which application they had strenuously and successfully resisted. The Committee of the House of Representatives, to whom the petition had been referred, made a very kind and respectful Report, but very decidedly adverse to the change asked for by the petitioners; affirming, in strong language, the immutability of the principles upon which the act was passed. They say, "That considering slavery as unlawful in itself, and as repugnant to our Constitution, they are of the opinion, that it is beyond the just authority of the Legislature to authorize it under any modification whatsoever;" which Report was unanimously adopted.

"The Committee for Improving the Condition of the Free Blacks," laid before the Society a proposition for opening a school for young black children, with information that they had found a black woman well qualified for a mistress of such a school, and willing to engage therein. The Committee was authorized to procure a suitable place for a school for free black children.

At the meeting of the Society, 4th month, a letter was read from the New York Society, proposing a Convention of Delegates from all the Abolition Societies in the United States, to meet at Philadelphia, for the purpose of deliberating on the means of attaining their common object, and of uniting in an address to Congress upon that subject. After mature consi-

deration, it was "Resolved, that the Society do agree to the proposition of the New York Society, and will appoint Delegates to the proposed Convention, provided a majority of the Abolition Societies in the United States do agree to the measure." In the 12th month, Delegates\* were appointed, with authority on behalf of this Society, to agree to an address to Congress on the subject of the slave trade; to decide on all matters that should come before them which have any relation to domestic slavery within the United States, and generally to unite in any measures that to the Convention may appear most likely to effect the common purposes of the several Abolition Societies. A Committee was appointed to prepare a place and provide other necessary accommodations for the meeting of the said Convention, which was proposed to be on the 1st of First month, 1794. And it was subsequently agreed that the Pennsylvania Society will defray all the expenses of copying, printing and publishing the proceedings of the Convention. The Delegates afterwards reported that the Convention assembled in the Select Council Chamber, at which ten Societies had been represented, and an address from that body to this Society had been agreed upon, which recommended, amongst other matters of great interest, the institution of annual or periodical discourses, or orations, to be delivered in public on the subject of slavery, and the means of its abolition; that by the frequent application of the force of reason, and the persuasive power of eloquence, slaveholders (or their abettors) might be awakened to a sense of their injustice, and startled with horror at the enormity of their conduct. And also, that such meetings of Delegates be annually convened.

The Delegates also informed the Society that the Convention had prepared Memorials to the Congress of the United States, and to the Legislature of this state, upon the subject of slavery. A Committee† was appointed to attend to the

\* The Delegates were: William Rogers, Samuel P. Griffitts, Samuel Coats, William Rawle, Robert Patterson, Benjamin Rush.

† The Committee, Jas. Pemberton, Wm. Rodgers, Wm. Rawle, Saml. Coats, T. Harrison, Robt. Patterson, Saml. P. Griffitts, and Thos. Parker.

progress of these memorials before the respective Houses to which they are addressed, and to give to the members of those bodies respectively such information on the subject as may be required. That Committee subsequently reported, "That Congress had passed an act to prohibit the carrying on the slave trade from the United States to any foreign place or country."

The Society were about this time engaged in the consideration of the question, "Whether slavery, under any modification whatever, is not inconsistent with the present Constitution of this state?" It was determined to bring the subject before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania for a legal decision; and a Committee\* was appointed to select a suitable case for that purpose, and prosecute it to a final decision. It appears that the Committee on this question were unable to bring a suitable case before the proper tribunals for several years. They at length made report in the 3d month, 1802: wherein it is stated, "that this important question had been brought to a judicial decision in the High Court of Errors and Appeals. That the question was ably and elaborately discussed by Jared Ingersoll, Wm. Lewis, and Wm. Rawle, on behalf of negress Flora, the plaintiff in the suit, and by Moses Levy and Jos. B. McKean, on behalf of the executors of Joseph Gransberry, the defendants. That at the close of the argument, which lasted three days, the judges, Benj. Chew, Edw. Shippen, Thos. Smith, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, Alex. Addison, Jacob Rush, and John D. Cox, delivered their unanimous opinion in favour of the defendants. So that it is at length fully decided by the highest legal authority in this state, that slavery is consistent with the Constitution."

1794. Towards the end of this year the Society proceeded to make arrangements for the meeting of the second Convention of the Abolition Societies. Delegates were again appointed. A Committee was charged to prepare an address to the Con-

\* Committee on the Constitutional question: J. Pemberton, W. Rodgers, R. Wells, Jas. Todd, Jacob Shoemaker, Walter Franklin, R. Patterson, Saml. Coats, Jno. Kaighn, Edw. Farris, Jno. Ely, T. Parker, Benj. Say, Saml. M. Fox, Sallows Shewell, and Francis Bailey.

vention, which was subsequently agreed upon. Among other subjects of interest, contained in that communication, the following items are selected, to wit: "In the year 1780, it is supposed that there were in the State of Pennsylvania 10,000 blacks held in a state of bondage. But from various causes, such as deaths, emancipations, &c., it appears by the census taken in 1790, that there remained but 3,737, which number they believe had been considerably reduced since that period."

They also state, that, from the best information they had obtained, there appears to be near 300 families of free blacks in Philadelphia, a large number of whom conduct themselves with reputation, and by the laws of this state are entitled to the privileges of white men. They have two houses for the performance of public worship, for which purpose they regularly assemble. A school has been established for the education of the children of the blacks, by and under the particular care of the Society, and taught by a well qualified black woman. Two other schools for the same purpose are likewise supported in the city by charitable contributions."

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## CHAPTER VII.

1796. *Fourth Month.* The Society was informed that "a bill to prevent the trade in slaves being carried on from one part to another of the United States, and for protecting free blacks from being carried into slavery," was about to be laid before Congress. It was resolved to appoint a Committee\* to give such assistance in the progress of the bill as might be useful or necessary.

In the Address from the Convention, 1796, they suggest the propriety of Abolitionists giving decided preference to such commodities as are of the culture or manufacture of freemen,

\* Committee: T. Harrison, Dr. S. P. Griffiths, James Todd, John Woodside, and William Garrum.



to those which are cultivated or manufactured by slaves, as a means by which every individual may discountenance oppression, and bear a testimony against a practice which is still suffered to remain to the disgrace of our land.

A letter was received from the New York Manumission Society, stating that some of the merchants of that city have been engaged in supplying the Spanish West Indies with slaves, contrary to the laws of the United States; and intimating that traders in this and other ports are probably engaged therein. The Society manifested its vigilant care over the great interests of the cause, by prompt attention to the suggestion of the New York Society. A committee\* was forthwith appointed to consider the subject, collect evidence, and to act as should appear necessary, for the discovery of vessels which trade in slaves to Africa, or elsewhere, in contravention of the laws of the United States, and to prosecute thereon.†

In the 10th month, mention is made of a publication having lately appeared from the press of Matthew Carey, entitled "A Dissertation on Slavery, with a proposal for the gradual abolition of it in the State of Virginia, by St. George Tucker;" the committee of correspondence were authorized to examine the said work, and, if found suitable for distribution by the Society, to purchase 100 copies.

The Society, in their Annual Address to the Convention to be held in 1797, in answer to their former request for the Societies to report the number of blacks who had been manumitted or rescued from slavery through their instrumentality, stated, "that although no exact account can be given, it appears, from an inspection of the voluminous minutes of our acting committee, that assistance has been given to many

\* Committee: John Woodside, Thomas Ross, Joseph Sharpless, Joseph Cruikshanks, and Thomas Wistar.

† That committee made a Report in the 10th month, 1797. The facts, as stated by them, will subsequently appear to have been communicated to the American Convention.

hundreds. And numbers have been benefitted by our interposition, of whose case no record has been made.

The same Address informs, "that two brigs had been seized and condemned by a jury in the District Court of the United States for the Pennsylvania District, upon the clearest testimony of having been engaged in a trade in slaves from Africa to the West Indies. On board of both vessels were found hand-cuffs, neck-yokes, chains, and other instruments of confinement and torture, all concurring to prove the horrid and nefarious business in which they had been engaged." "While humanity recoils at the narrative of these facts, the friends of mankind will be consoled by the consideration that a kind Providence has permitted their disclosure as a future terror to evil doers, and as a means of preventing these daring and cruel violations of the rights of human nature.

1797-8-9. In 1797, information was received that the Wilmington Abolition Society, in consequence of their great exertions in behalf of the oppressed blacks, the small number of their members, and the low state of their funds, which were inadequate to meet the expenses, unavoidably incurred in the prosecution of their arduous labours in this righteous cause, had become so far discouraged, as to intimate their intention of suspending their operations. The Society resolved to appoint a committee\* to attend their meeting, with an address from this Society, and a grant of twelve pounds ten shillings per quarter, for the next two years, and to endeavour to sustain and reanimate them to renewed zeal in the prosecution of the cause, for which they were associated as a Society.

In the address of the American Convention of 1798, it is stated that information had been received, that vessels are fitted out with cargoes for certain of the West India Islands, part of which cargoes are there disposed of, and with the proceeds slaves are purchased, and carried to other of the Islands and sold. Also, that other vessels are laden with rum for certain parts of Africa, with the proceeds of which we have

\*T. Harrison, T. Parker, G. Williams.

reason to believe the natives are purchased, and afterwards conveyed and sold as slaves in the West Indies. The Convention recommends a strict inquiry to be made into the conduct of persons, thus offending against the dictates of humanity, and the honour and interests of our country, and that proper measures be adopted to punish and prevent such nefarious and disgraceful practices. This subject was referred by the Society to a committee. In the address to the next Convention, it is stated that the inquiries they had recommended, had been instituted, by which it appears that such a traffic is extensively carried on, and although the practice is notorious, the offenders escape with impunity, owing in a great measure to defect in the existing laws upon the subject. The address suggests to the Convention the expediency of an application being made by that body to Congress, for a revision and amendment of the laws in relation to the subject.

1799 A committee\* was appointed in the Eleventh month, to attend to and promote the passage of a bill, then pending before the Legislature of this state, for the total abolition of slavery. They subsequently reported that they had attended the Legislature, and sedulously endeavoured to effect the purpose of their appointment, but their exertions had failed of success.

1800. *Seventh Month*.—A special meeting of the Society was called at the suggestion of the committee on the slave-trade; their minutes were produced, by which it appears that two American vessels, having on board a considerable number of black people, supposed to have been bound to the Havanna, had been captured by one of the armed vessels of the United States, and sent into this port; and that the said black persons are now in circumstances demanding the attention of this Society. A committee† was appointed to watch over their situation, and that of any others who may be hereafter brought

\* T. Parker, R. Patterson, Wm. West, Jas. Todd, and Wm. Webb.

† Geo. Williams, S. P. Griffiths, David Thomas, R. Patterson, Samuel Bettle, T. Harrison, and Edward Garrigues.

in under the acts of Congress, against the slave-trade, and to afford them such assistance and protection, by co-operating with the officers of the General and State Governments, as may be necessary, and to provide places for such as are found to be free. That committee subsequently reported, that at the request and under the direction of the Marshal of the United States for the District of Pennsylvania, they had placed out, principally in the country, one hundred and twenty-six persons, the survivors of the cargo of slaves taken from the schooners *Phoebe* and *President*.

The condition of the free people of colour, many of whom had but recently come out from under the grievous yoke of bondage, was almost constantly a source of anxiety and concern to the Society, the debasing effects of slavery having in many instances become almost a second nature, and when released from under the control of arbitrary power, they were led to indulge in idleness, intemperance, and all its concomitant vices. To obviate these evils, as far as human means could do so, addresses were frequently issued, containing pertinent advice and counsel to the coloured people, in relation to their moral duties. In the Tenth month of this year, (1800) a committee, which had been appointed to devise means for promoting greater regularity of deportment amongst the free blacks, reported, "that they were impressed with the belief, that advice on the subject of religion and morals ought frequently to be given to them, in such a manner as to convince them that we are sincerely desirous of promoting their welfare." An address prepared for that purpose was submitted, and being approved, a large committee\* was appointed to attend their places of public worship, to read the address to them, and distribute it at their discretion. That committee

\*Jos. Clark, Wm. Wigglesworth, Saml. Harvey, R. Patterson, Benj. Kite, Geo. Williams, T. Harrison, Jno. Evans, Saml. Smith, Timothy Paxton, Jno. Ormrod, Wm. Jones, Jos. Cruikshanks, Emmor Kimber, Mordecai Churchman, I. T. Hopper, Jno. Miller, T. Rogers, James Traquair, and Jno. B. Wilson.

some time after, reported that they had performed the service with which they had been charged. They had attended at the places of public worship, and at three societies of coloured persons instituted for the benevolent purpose of assisting each other and their families in sickness and distress. They had also divided themselves into sub-committees, and visited the families of the coloured people in the city and liberties generally. They found six hundred and fifty-nine families, containing about two thousand three hundred persons, and estimate the number of coloured people living in white families, at four hundred. They add, that the greater number of coloured people, appear to live orderly, decently and comfortably, and in the course of their services, the committee and the address were favourably received, and in many instances strong testimony was borne expressive of great satisfaction on the part of those visited.

1801. A bill having been introduced into the Senate of Pennsylvania, ostensibly providing for the total abolition of slavery, but containing provisions highly injurious and oppressive to the blacks; a special meeting of the Society was called, to consider the expediency of addressing the Legislature on the subject. A memorial in accordance with the decision of the meeting was prepared, from the tenor of which, it appears that it had been proposed to create a fund for the purchase of slaves, by a tax upon 'the free blacks for that special purpose. The memorial states, "that the Society impressed with a high regard for the Constitution of the State, have ever sincerely lamented, that a mistaken policy should have led to a violation of the first most clear and solemn declaration of its bill of rights, which declares 'That all men are born equally free and independent, and having certain inherent and indefeasible rights; among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property and reputation, and of pursuing their own happiness.' With this solid ground to act upon, they had hoped that an enlightened Legislature would with



firmness have ventured to declare that slavery in this State cannot constitutionally exist, and a declaratory statute to this effect, has appeared to your memorialists a consistent and just mode of at once announcing a candid and irrefutable exposition of the Constitution, and an overthrow of the existing system of domestic slavery, by which it has been so long violated. How far does the bill before you afford a prospect of these expectations being realized."

"Why," they ask, "is the fund for the redemption of slaves to be created by a heavy and exclusive tax on the people of colour, when many of them have pined away their best days in a cruel bondage, and from the weight of declining years are now barely able by their industry to supply the common wants of nature, and are not permitted the full rights of citizenship?"

The memorial was adopted, and forwarded to the Legislature.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

1803. At the annual meeting of the Society, held First month, a communication was received from the venerable James Pemberton, who had served as President for a period of thirteen years, in which he very respectfully states, that, in consequence of his advanced age, he feels himself incompetent to fill the station he has so long occupied, and urgently requests to be excused from a re-election to that important office. The Society subsequently proceeded to an election for officers, and Dr. Benjamin Rush was elected President, and Robert Patterson and Thomas Parker, Vice Presidents.

In noticing the election of Dr. Benjamin Rush, as President of the Society, it may be proper to remark, that in addition to his eminent reputation as a medical practitioner and teacher, he was no less distinguished as a philanthropist, and a friend of the rights of man. He was a signer of the Declaration of

Independence, and subsequently a member of the Convention for the adoption of the Constitution. He also early identified himself with the unpopular cause of emancipation, and, as a delegate from this Society, took an active part in the American Convention for the abolition of slavery, which met in Philadelphia in 1794. He was chairman of a committee which drafted an Address issued by that body to the people of the United States, on the subject of slavery, which, for vigour and simplicity of style, and emphatic condemnation of the system of slavery, has rarely been equalled.

As this is probably the first Address on the subject of slavery which was ever put forth by a public body in the United States, it is deemed worthy of a place here in connection with its distinguished author.

*“To the Citizens of the United States.”*

The Address of the Delegates from the several Societies, formed in different parts of the United States, for promoting the abolition of slavery, in Convention assembled at Philadelphia, on the first day of January, 1794.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS.—United to you by the ties of citizenship, and partakers with you of the blessings of a free government, we take the liberty of addressing you upon a subject, highly interesting to the credit and prosperity of the United States.

It is the glory of our country to have originated a system of opposition to the commerce in that part of our fellow creatures who compose the nations of Africa.

Much has been done by the citizens of some of the States to abolish this disgraceful traffic, and to improve the condition of those unhappy people, whom the ignorance or the avarice of our ancestors had bequeathed to us as slaves; but the evil still continues, and our country is yet disgraced by laws and practices, which level the creature man with a part of the brute creation.

Many reasons concur in persuading us to abolish domestic slavery in our country.

It is inconsistent with the safety of the liberties of the United States.

Freedom and slavery cannot long exist together. An unlimited power over the time, labour, and posterity of our fellow-creatures, necessarily unfits men for discharging the public and private duties of citizens of a republic.

It is inconsistent with sound policy, in exposing the States which permit it, to all those evils which insurrections and the most resentful war have introduced into one of the richest islands in the West Indies.

It is unfriendly to the present exertions of the inhabitants of Europe, in favour of liberty. What people will advocate freedom, with a zeal proportioned to its blessings, while they view the purest republic in the world tolerating in its bosom a body of slaves?

In vain has the tyranny of kings been rejected, while we permit in our country a domestic despotism, which involves, in its nature, most of the vices and miseries that we have endeavoured to avoid.

It is degrading to our rank as men in the scale of being. Let us use our reason and social affections for the purposes for which they were given, or cease to boast a pre-eminence over animals, that are unpolluted with our crimes.

But higher motives to justice and humanity towards our fellow-creatures remain yet to be mentioned.

Domestic slavery is repugnant to the principles of Christianity. It prostrates every benevolent and just principle of action in the human heart. It is rebellion against the authority of a common FATHER. It is a practical denial of the extent and efficacy of the death of a common SAVIOUR. It is an usurpation of the prerogative of the GREAT SOVEREIGN of the Universe, who has solemnly claimed an exclusive property in the souls of men.

But if this view of the enormity of the evil of domestic slavery should not affect us, there is one consideration more which ought to alarm and impress us, especially at the present juncture.

It is a violation of a divine precept of universal justice, which has, in no instance, escaped with impunity.

The crimes of nations, as well as of individuals, are often designated in their punishments; and we conceive it to be no forced construction, of some of the calamities which now distress or im-

pend our country, to believe that they are the measure of evils which we have meted to others.

The ravages committed upon many of our fellow-citizens by the Indians, and the depredations upon the liberty and commerce of others of the citizens of the United States by the Algerines, both unite in proclaiming to us, in the most forcible language, ‘to loose the bands of wickedness, to break every yoke, to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free.’

We shall conclude this address by recommending to you,

*First.* To refrain immediately from that species of rapine and murder which has improperly been softened with the name of the African trade. It is Indian cruelty, and Algerine piracy, in another form.

*Secondly.* To form Societies in every State, for the purpose of promoting the abolition of the slave-trade, of domestic slavery, the relief of persons unlawfully held in bondage, and for the improvement of the condition of Africans, and their descendants amongst us.

The Societies which we represent, have beheld with triumph, the success of their exertions, in many instances, in favour of their African brethren; and, in full reliance upon the continuance of divine support and direction, they humbly hope, their labours will never cease, while there exists a single slave in the United States.”

1804. In the Address to the American Convention of this year, it was stated, that agreeably to a suggestion from that body, as to the expediency of having a standing committee, charged with the publication of suitable extracts, essays, and fugitive pieces relative to slavery, the subject had been placed under care of the Society’s committee of correspondence.

A special meeting was held in the Second month. In consequence of information being received, that a bill, entitled “An Act for the Abolition of Slavery,” &c., was under consideration in the Senate of this State, it was resolved, that a memorial\* be addressed to the Legislature on the subject. An

\* Committee to prepare the memorial: T. Parker, G. Williams, and Samuel Bettle.

Essay being produced, was adopted. It respectfully represents, "That, in common with a vast majority of our fellow citizens, we have noticed, with great satisfaction, that a bill is now pending before the Legislature for the immediate and total abolition of slavery forever in this Commonwealth. Although we do not deem it necessary, at this enlightened period, to go into a long detail of reasoning, yet, we believe it a duty, to profess our warm and decided approbation of the measure. We respectfully and earnestly solicit, that the present opportunity may not be permitted to escape for wiping away the opprobrium which has so justly attached to our State on account of the manifest difference between the noble Charter of Liberty contained in our excellent Constitution, and a practice so pregnant with evil, and so directly in opposition to all our boasted professions."

"We humbly conceive, that in every aspect in which the question can present itself, even tested by the cold maxims of policy, no period has occurred wherein the measure we advocate could, with more propriety, be adopted." "We therefore respectfully entreat, an early decision abolishing slavery in this State."

Such was the style in which our predecessors in this glorious warfare approached the Legislative bodies, when addressing them upon the important and deeply interesting subject of slavery.

1804. In the Sixth month, the Society was informed that the ship Rufus, Captain Hazard, had been seized, upon suspicion of being fitted out for the purpose of being employed in the slave trade. A special committee\* was appointed to investigate the circumstances of the case. It appearing to require prompt attention, they informed Captain Hazard of their intention to interrogate the inferior officers and seamen, which he readily acceded to. They proceeded on board, accompanied by a Justice of the Peace for the District of Southwark,

\* T. Harrison, I. T. Hopper, Mordecai Churchman, W. Jones, Hansson Waters, John Folwell and Othniel Alsop.



who *ex parti* and separately examined the second mate, boatswain and several others. After mature consideration, it was deemed unsafe to prosecute the business further. Although, from the nature of the cargo, the manner of her fitting up, the renewal of her fixtures for carrying arms, the number of hands, the great quantity of water and provisions on board, and a variety of other circumstances, no doubts remained on the minds of the committee that the ship *Rufus* was, and actually is intended to be employed in the transportation of slaves; yet the total want of positive, and the deficiency of strongly presumptive evidence, induced the conclusion that it would be best to relinquish the object before any considerable expense was incurred. The ship was accordingly released.

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## CHAPTER IX.

1805. Twenty-five years have now elapsed since the law was passed for the gradual abolition of slavery in this state, the operation of which had so far reduced the number of slaves, as in great degree to lessen the occasion for active exertions by the Society in relation to the primary object of the association—that of “promoting the abolition of slavery.” Hence we begin to find indications of the commencement of that decline of energy, and gradual tendency to a state of apathy, the fruition of which the present remnant of the Society have so much reason to deplore. These remarks are induced by the language of the Address to the American Convention for this year, in which it is avowed that “much of the exertions of our Society will, in consequence of the rapid decline of slavery *amongst us*, be employed in future, less in obtaining the liberation of blacks, than in the improvement of their morals, and the promotion of the education of their offspring. It gives us great pleasure that the blacks themselves seem lately to have felt more than ordinary concern on this subject.

In addition to the means of education heretofore provided, they have established two schools in this city amongst themselves." Subsequent observations will show the progress made by the coloured people in the improvement of their condition mentally and physically.

The increase of the overwhelming power and despotism of slavery begins to be more and more apparent. Its domineering tendency and withering effects are visible even in the communications of the American Convention as early as 1804, in which it is stated "that they have to regret, not only the absence of Delegates from the Abolition Societies of the Southern States, where slavery most abounds, but the omission on their part of sending a communication, as the Rules of the Convention seem to have contemplated." In the Address of this Society for 1806, to that body, this neglect of the southern Societies is adverted to, and a few of their remarks are quoted, as corroborative of the sentiments just presented.

They say—"It is a subject of serious regret that these annual associations have of latter years been destitute of representatives from those states wherein the evil which we desire to eradicate, most extensively prevails. Exertions have not been wanting on your part to arouse the dormant spirit of the friends of our enslaved fellow men, but those exertions have proved unavailing. To what is this to be attributed? We believe the true reason why ostensible and public measures are not pursued by the advocates of abolition in the Southern States, will be found in a pretty general impression, that it would not, under existing circumstances, and in the present temper of the public mind, be expedient and useful. The extreme unpopularity of all combined attempts, has therefore introduced the substitute of individual interference as particular urgencies require. Perhaps it may be questioned whether, all things considered, this plan may not be the most eligible."

We grieve to say that this language emanated from the Pennsylvania Society. Far be it from us of the present day, to call in question, or underrate the sterling merit of the

valuable and noble champions who were at that time actively engaged in carrying on this righteous cause. It is perhaps difficult for us to appreciate the inveterate malice by which they were assailed at all points, and the incessant contumely to which the advocates for the rights of the coloured man in strong slaveholding neighbourhoods were constantly exposed.

In addition to the suggestions alluded to, the Address offers as a subject of inquiry well deserving the attention of the Convention, "whether any material injury would arise from a temporary suspension of their functions." This, coming from one of the most respectable and important Societies of which the Convention was composed, had the effect contemplated; the meetings of that body, which had previously been held annually, were determined, by vote of the Convention, in future, to be convened triennially.

1809. In the address from the Society, we find the difficulties in the way of their operations again adverted to, serving to exhibit the idea then held in relation to the apathy, which began to be sensibly prevalent, but which the writers of the address do not attribute to motives which at this day but too obviously appear to attach to the relaxation of energy, and lowering of tone with which their sentiments are expressed. We quote a few paragraphs, which will also serve to explain more clearly, the causes of the increasing obstructions they had to contend with, viz :

"Notwithstanding the apparent advancement of the great cause of emancipation, the application of the laws on this interesting subject to the relief of the oppressed, becomes daily more difficult. Prudence has become necessary to our security, and persuasion to our success. While we thus candidly acknowledge the necessity of circumspection, we deprecate an inference that our conduct is in any degree influenced by a dereliction of principle.

"Hitherto, the approving voice of the community, and the liberal interpretation of the laws, have smoothed the path of duty, and promoted a satisfactory issue to our humane exertions.

At present, however, the sentiments of our fellow citizens, and the decisions of our Courts, are less auspicious.

“ This change of opinion, so injurious to the cause we have espoused, is to be attributed to the success, rather than to the misconduct of the Society. Our early and meritorious exertions, awakened the attention, and secured the approbation of a large portion of our fellow citizens. The oppressor shrunk from a contest against triumphant justice, and general indignation, while the oppressed became emboldened by success, and strengthened by the increasing current of opinion in favour of emancipation. The report of our transactions spread far beyond the limits prescribed for our exertions by the laws of Pennsylvania. Hundreds of our fellow beings in the neighbouring states, who bore with impatience the galling yoke of slavery, availed themselves of every opportunity which circumstances might furnish, to claim the protection of our statutes. Even those who had obtained their freedom, resorted too generally to this city, as an asylum where a repetition of the wrongs they had endured was not to be feared. Freed from the shackles, but not from the vices of slavery, those victims of inhumanity thronged our streets in search of employment—but too many of whom, serve only to swell the list of our criminals, and augment the catalogue of our paupers.”

In the communication of the Convention to the Society, amongst divers other interesting observations, they say: “ We rejoice with you that our national government has had the wisdom and humanity to embrace the first constitutional opportunity offered, to pass a law which entirely prohibits our citizens from foreign traffic in human flesh.” “ But we still have to sympathize with nearly a million of human beings, who are yet subject to the bonds of slavery within the United States—we have yet to mourn over this dishonour of our country.” “ Domestic slavery is a national crime, and it is our duty to employ the pen and the press, for the dissemination of such arguments as shall convince our countrymen of the injustice and impolicy of such slavery.”

1809. *Tenth month.*—The Society received a communication from an Abolition Society, lately instituted near Frankfort, Kentucky, enclosing a printed copy of their Constitution and Rules of Decorum, which was referred to the Committee of Correspondence.

In the 12th month of this year, the first proposition was made by the Committee of Education for the Society to have erected a suitable building for the accommodation of a school or schools for coloured children. A plan was submitted, the probable cost of which was estimated at about \$2000, which it was supposed might be raised by subscription. The subject, however, remained undecided, and nothing was done, except the raising funds for the erection of the building, until early in 1812, when a new plan was submitted, which was adopted, and the Building Committee directed to proceed forthwith to the erection. In 1813, the Committee reported the completion of the building, the total cost of which amounted to a little over \$3,100. The Committee of Education was remodelled, and made to consist of thirteen members, under the title of the Board of Education.

As the establishment of schools for the education of coloured children was an important movement of the Society, we present a few extracts from the first Report of the Board of Education after it had been reorganized.

“A teacher, well qualified, was engaged at a salary of \$300 per annum, and the school for boys opened on the 1st of Third month, 1813. Rules for apportioning the duties of the members, and forming in rotation a Visiting Committee of Three, were adopted. The Visiting Committee were to attend at the school once in each week for the admission of scholars, and for the general concerns of the school. Rules were also adopted for its own government, and an early and unreserved attention was devoted by the Board for carrying fully into effect the views of the Society in the establishment of the institution.”



## CHAPTER X.

1811. *Twelfth month*.—A committee was appointed to draft a memorial to our State Legislature for a law effectually to prevent the practice of kidnapping negroes within this commonwealth, by the imposition of severe penalties on persons convicted thereof. And, also, to inquire what other amendments may be necessary to the several abolition laws of this state. The committee on this occasion were Roberts Vaux, Timothy Paxson, Othniel Alsop, Thomas P. Cope, and Joseph Parker. They were directed to confer with some of the counsellors of the Society, in order to procure the draft of a law embracing the amendments deemed necessary to the existing act of the commonwealth. The memorial was adopted, and the committee which had prepared it were charged with the care of having it presented. In the Fourth month following, they reported that one of their number had been deputed to the Legislature, who presented the memorial, which was read in both Houses, and referred to a committee who brought in a bill which came under consideration, but was postponed to the next Legislature.

1813. *Second month*.—A special meeting of the Society was convened in consequence of sundry conversations reported to have been had, between a member of this Society and the President of the United States, at Washington; and, also, conversations and letters between said member and a distinguished Senator, relative to the trade in slaves carried on by citizens of the Eastern States, under cover of foreign flags.\* A memorial to Congress upon the subject was prepared, setting forth the fact that “the flags of foreign countries are employed by American citizens to protect this traffic, and the ports of those dominions

\* The Committee were: Roberts Vaux, Nathan Smith, Jos. Parker, Jos. M. Paul, and Thos. P. Cope.

furnish a market for cargoes thus illegally procured." It also says, "From information entitled to the fullest credence, we are enabled to declare that upwards of seventy thousand unoffending Africans were taken from their native soil in the year 1810, and deprived of their legitimate rank among mankind; and it is with humiliation and shame confessed, that a large share of the profits derived from the sale of these unhappy beings, has flowed into the coffers of citizens of the United States, who conduct such illicit enterprises and evade the penalties imposed by the laws, through the instrumentality of Spanish and Portuguese colours." This memorial was presented to Congress, and referred to a committee of five members, who subsequently reported that the approaching close of the session, and multiplicity of important business yet to be transacted, would in their opinion prevent due attention to this subject, and recommending early attention and consideration thereof at the succeeding session.

1813. *Third month.*—A special meeting of the Society was held, at which the following extracts from the Journal of the House of Representatives was read :

"February 23d. Jacob Mitchell presented a petition from sundry inhabitants of the city and liberties of Philadelphia, stating that the number of people of colour on record within the same, amounts to nine thousand seven hundred and sixty-two, and that there are four thousand runaway negroes there who are not on record ; that they are becoming nuisances ; and praying that provision may be made by law, to oblige them all to be registered, authorizing the sale for a term of years of those who shall be convicted of crimes, for the purpose of compensating the persons who may have been plundered, and for the expense of their prosecution ; and also, that a tax may be levied upon them for the support of their own poor." Which petition was read and referred to the members from Philadelphia.

A memorial to the Legislature, expressive of the sentiments of the Society in relation to the false and injurious statement set forth in this petition, was prepared and directed to be properly

signed, and forwarded to the Legislature. From it we extract the following, to wit: "Your memorialists disclaim the office, should it be imputed to them, of palliating or defending the crimes and misdemeanors which a portion of the African population, in common with their fellow beings of the great human family, are too often the authors of. But as they believe it to be an eternal truth, 'that all men are born equally free and independent, and that they have certain inherent and inalienable rights,' we are imperiously bound to remonstrate and protest against any and every attempt to mark for exception to this great and benevolent maxim, any part of the rational creation of God. If the Legislature should adopt laws wholly designed for the civil control of our African fellow citizens, or enact a criminal code especially intended for the punishment of offences which they commit, there will be an utter forsaking of those exalted opinions which the founders of the Republic have decreed to be inseparable from its existence." The memorial also states, "that although some of the people of colour are guilty of infractions of the laws, owing to the facility of obtaining the means of intoxication from tippling houses, yet a large portion of them are entitled to the reputation of respectable, industrious, and useful members of society." The proposed alteration of the criminal code was defeated.

1813. The Society was again specially convened in the 5th month, on account of the death of their President, Dr. Benjamin Rush. The following preamble and resolution were adopted, and directed to be published in the public papers of the city:

"It having pleased Divine Providence to remove from this state of existence, Dr. Benjamin Rush, who was long distinguished for his attachment to the cause of the African race, and whose efforts to improve the condition, and promote the welfare of that afflicted portion of the human family, were eminently manifested, during nine years' presidency of this institution;

"Therefore, Resolved, That this Society sincerely lament the termination of the useful labours of its late venerable President; that gratitude for his services, inspires this acknowledgment of

their value, and respect for his memory dictates this tribute to his name."

The Society then proceeded to the election of a President, and Dr. Caspar Wistar was elected to that office.

1815. *Third month.*—The following minute and resolution appear on record:

"It being desirable that the schools instituted by this Society, at their school house on Cherry street, should have an appropriate name, for readily and conveniently distinguishing them from others; therefore,

"Resolved, That the well known and highly appreciated services of Thomas Clarkson, of London, in the cause of African emancipation, have entitled him to the grateful acknowledgments of the friends of humanity, and his name being inseparably connected in their minds with the interesting object to which his life has been devoted, the schools above referred to be hereafter known and designated by the title of 'The Clarkson schools;' and the building erected for them was subsequently called Clarkson Hall."

The pecuniary rewards offered by slaveholders, for the recovery of their absconding slaves, too often proved sufficient to induce many of the lower classes of our citizens, as well as some inferior magistrates and constables, to assist in finding out and arresting many people of colour, on some alleged claim as fugitives from labour. Under cover of such pretexts, many who were lawfully entitled to their freedom were taken, while others were seduced by offers of high wages, to hire themselves out to services which required them to go beyond the limits of the state, thus becoming exposed to the danger of being kidnapped, both cases frequently resulting in their being carried off into slavery. The business of the acting committee appears to have been greatly increased in consequence of such proceedings, and in 1816, a special committee was appointed to assist them in detecting and bringing to exemplary punishment, every person who should be found guilty of violating the laws of the land. The manner in which the Society looked upon such characters,

and the language used on such occasions, is shown in the following resolution :

“Resolved, That this Society hold in the utmost abhorrence the conduct of a number of persons that now infest the city and liberties of Philadelphia, for the diabolical purpose of seducing and carrying out of this state, free people of colour, for the purpose of depriving them of that protection which the laws of Pennsylvania afford. And we will use all legal means in our power, to bring to merited punishment all such violators of domestic tranquillity, and the known laws of the land.”

1816. At the annual meeting, a Committee was appointed to consider the propriety of presenting a memorial to the Legislature of this state, recommending such amendments to the laws relative to people of colour, as may be deemed advisable. At a subsequent meeting the Committee reported, “that, after full consideration of the subject, they thought it inexpedient to address the State Legislature, until an alteration shall be made by Congress in the law, under the shelter of which most of the outrages on the rights of the free people of colour are committed; and that there appears to be a favourable opening for petitioning Congress to this effect. They recommend that an attempt should be made to obtain an amendment to the law in question; and a memorial in relation to this subject was adopted, and forwarded to Congress.”

In the Third month following, letters were received from Washington, stating that the memorials of the Society had been presented; and that it was designed to have them referred to a Committee who had charge of a similar application from the Society of Friends. But nothing further appears to have been done upon the subject.

In the Address of this Society to the American Convention, to be held in 1817, it is stated as “a subject of great regret, that the number of those actively engaged in the cause of the oppressed Africans is very small. Many of our aged brethren

\* Committee were: Joseph Lea, Benj. Tucker, W. Wayne, Jr., and D. J. Davis.



have retired from the contest, and with our benevolent citizens an apathy prevails—the more to be lamented, as we fear it is the result of a mistaken impression that the work is nearly accomplished.”

In answer to a request made by a former Convention, to have a list of those peculiar cases which have occasionally claimed the attention of our acting committee, they state, “that they have been concerned in fifty-three cases; in thirty-six of which they were successful in rescuing the objects of their care from slavery, and the other seventeen were given up by the legal authorities.” A fear was expressed “that many have returned to slavery, on account of the difficulty of procuring the necessary documents and testimony to substantiate their freedom.” “Many cases yet remain under care, in some of which suits are pending, to which favourable results are anticipated. Amongst other cases which have claimed the attention of the committee, are several in which people of colour brought into this country contrary to the laws of the United States prohibiting the slave-trade, have been rescued from the degrading condition to which they had been illegally reduced, and restored to the enjoyment of freedom. A very important decision has also been lately made by the Supreme Court of this State, by which the freedom of children born therein is completely established, although the mother may have been a *runaway slave*.”

Amongst the various means which had been formerly devised by the Society, for assisting the coloured people, the judicious placing out of their children was recommended, that they might learn some trade or business, by which when arriving at man’s estate they might be able to earn an honest and reputable subsistence. In order to facilitate which, a standing committee was annually appointed, denominated “the apprenticing committee.” After continuing its labours for several years, and faithfully endeavouring to fulfil the beneficial objects contemplated by the Society in their appointment, they this year, (1817) reported that they had been able to bind out but a

very small number, owing to the disinclination of the coloured people, to put their children out, until they can keep them no longer, and then the committee is applied to; and when a suitable place for the child was provided, the parents had perhaps moved away and could not be found, or had otherwise disposed of the child." In consequence of these difficulties, the committee was discontinued.

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## CHAPTER XI.

A committee\* was at the same time appointed in conjunction with three of the counsellors of the Society, viz: William Rawle, John Hallowell, and William Delany, to examine the several laws of this commonwealth relative to people of colour, note their defects, and report a bill to be laid before the Legislature, embracing such amendments as should appear to be requisite.

A memorial to Congress on the subject of the fugitive law was submitted. After being deliberately considered, it was adopted, and directed to be signed by the officers of the Society, and forwarded to John Sergeant, at that time a Representative in Congress for this State, with a request that he should present it.

1818. At a special meeting in the Third month, on account of the death of the President, Dr. Caspar Wistar, a resolution was adopted expressive of "the loss which the Society was sensible of having sustained, by that afflicting event, and influenced by a recollection of his services in the cause of the oppressed African, the memory of this distinguished philanthropist will be gratefully cherished by the members of this association."

\*Dr. Jonas Preston, Benj. Tucker, J. M. Paul, Abram L. Pennock, and R. C. Wood.

The Society then proceeded to the election of a President to fill the vacancy, when Wm. Rawle was duly elected.

1818. In the address of the Society, adopted Eleventh month 19th, to the American Convention, we have the first notice of the "efforts then making for the establishment of a colony of free people of colour, upon the coast of Africa, under the auspices and control of the American Colonization Society; which was, from the first, viewed with intense interest by the legitimate friends of African emancipation." The address recommended that a serious investigation should be made as to the probable results of the measure.

The Convention referred the consideration of the subject to a committee, who reported decidedly against the colonization scheme, as inimical to the objects of the abolition societies, and concluded by offering the following resolution, viz. "Resolved, as the sense of this Convention as explanatory of its views of this interesting subject, that the gradual and total emancipation of all persons of colour, and their literary and moral education should precede their colonization," which was adopted.

The objects of the Colonization Society, also engaged the attention of the coloured people of Philadelphia, and a large meeting was held in relation to the subject, at which the venerable and highly respected James Forten presided. They denounced the scheme as injurious and prejudicial to the best interests of their people, and calculated to increase the tension of the chains of slavery, rather than to promote its final extinction.

Another memorial to Congress was agreed upon at a meeting of the Society held in the Twelfth month, 1818, on the subject of the sale of people of colour under the act of Congress prohibiting the slave trade. The memorial was prepared\* for general circulation and signature of the citizens at large. It set forth, "That your memorialists are informed

\* Committee: Wm. Rawle, Richard Peters, Jr., and Dr. Nathan Shoe-maker.

and believe, that, since the passing of the act prohibiting the importation of slaves into any part of the United States, from and after the first day of January, 1808, sundry persons of colour, who have been illegally imported into the United States, or have been seized in the attempt to import them, have been sold by the 5th section of that act, which declares, "that neither the importer, nor any person or persons claiming under him, shall hold any right or title whatsoever to any negro, mulatto, or person of colour, nor to the service or labour thereof, who may be imported or brought within the territories thereof, in violation of this law, but the same shall remain subject to any regulation, not contravening the provisions of this act, which the several states or territories may at any time hereafter make for disposing of any such negro, mulatto, or person of colour. It sets forth that such a procedure is inconsistent with natural justice, and contrary to the spirit of the law, which was intended to prohibit the increase of slaves in the United States, yet their number would be increased by every seizure made under the law. That to subject those unhappy men to state regulations is unjust, as the oppression of the individual is precisely the same, whether the individual is sold into slavery by the acts of a state government or by a mercenary importer."

This memorial was extensively circulated, and received upwards of 800 signatures; and the committee being enlarged, the number must have been greatly increased. But no account is given of its being presented, or of any effect produced.

At the same meeting a memorial\* to the Legislature of Pennsylvania was adopted, in which the insufficiency of the laws at that time in force for the protection of human liberty was complained of—"the soil of Pennsylvania having been frequently polluted by the footsteps of kidnappers, who, regardless of the laws of God, and disdaining the penalties of the statute, have violated the sanctity of domestic repose, with brutal violence making captive free people, the descendants of

\* Committee to prepare which was Roberts Vaux, Richard C. Wood, Richard Peters, Jr., Dr. Jonas Preston and William Rawle.

Africans, conveying them to remote places, and consigning them to hopeless bondage. The Act of Assembly, March, 1788, provides, that upon conviction of this high offence, a fine of one hundred pounds, and twelve months imprisonment shall be visited upon the offender. But this law affords no adequate protection to the people of colour—it holds out no availing terror to avarice and cruelty.” The Legislature was therefore earnestly solicited to enact such penalties as will effectually prevent the practice of man-stealing in this commonwealth. The memorial was directed to be forwarded to our Representatives, with an urgent request to use their utmost exertions to procure a more efficient law upon the subject.

The memorial appears to have been well received, and the application of the Society was successful. By a minute of the Society, 3d mo. 30th, 1820, the acting committee were authorised to have printed for distribution 500 copies of the law recently enacted by our State Legislature, more effectually to prevent kidnapping, as soon as a certified copy can be obtained.

The annual report of the Board of Education for this year (1818) speaks in high terms of the beneficial effects of the Clarkson schools, which they say “furnish a decided refutation of the charge that the mental endowments of the descendants of Africa are inferior to those possessed by their white brethren.” “We can assert without fear of contradiction, that the pupils of this seminary will sustain a fair comparison with those of any other institution, in which the same elementary branches are taught.” There had been 102 boys and 129 girls admitted during the year, and 90 boys and 60 girls were then in school, the latter having been organized during the year under the entire direction of the Board.

In the year 1819, the Territory of Missouri applied to Congress to be admitted into the Union as a member of the United States. The application was opposed by the friends of freedom, unless the constitution of the proposed new state should be modified, so as to prevent the extension of slavery. The thanks of this society were voted to James



Talmadge, Esq., who proposed the exclusion of slavery from the new state of Missouri; also to John W. Taylor, Esq., who moved the same restrictions in relation to the Arkansas Territory. And also to all the members of both houses who advocated and supported these propositions. It is further stated on the records as "a subject of heartfelt satisfaction to the members of this Society, that with but one or two exceptions, every Senator and Representative from the State of Pennsylvania approved and supported those measures" of opposition to the extension of the slaveholding power.

The society continued anxiously alive to the injurious effects to the cause of Freedom by the measures recently adopted by the national legislature upon the celebrated Missouri question. John Sergeant of this city, who was at that time a representative in Congress from this State, having opposed the admission of Missouri into the Union as a slave state, in a very able and interesting speech, it was determined that 750 copies of that speech be printed for general circulation. A committee\* appointed for the special purpose of watching the progress of the question, while before Congress, made a report, which was adopted as expressive of the feelings of the Society on the occasion. It was directed to be printed, and a copy was forwarded to every Senator and Representative in Congress who had voted in favour of preventing the further introduction of slavery into Missouri.

1820. In the 1st mo. the Society instituted measures which resulted in obtaining for the children of coloured parents a share of school education, to which they are entitled by the law of Pennsylvania providing for the schooling of all the poor children in the commonwealth at the public expense. A committee was appointed to confer with the Controllers of the Public Schools on the subject. They subsequently reported that they had had an interview with the Controllers and School Directors, who admitted that the benefits of the

\* Wm. Rawle, Richard Peters, Jr., and Jas. M. Paul.

law were equally intended for, and ought to be extended to coloured as well as to poor white children. In order to facilitate a commencement of the public education of coloured children, the committee were authorized to offer the use of the school rooms in Clarkson Hall to the Controllers or Board of Directors of the Public Schools for that purpose, reserving the right of using the rooms at specified times for the meetings of the society, &c. The committee, after having laid the offer before the Directors, left it for their consideration; they finally reported that the board had informed them that they had procured a building and opened a school for the education of the children of both sexes of indigent persons of colour, and therefore respectfully declined the offer made by the Society.

In the 12th mo. of this year a special meeting of the Society, to which the public were invited, was held in the session room of the Presbyterian Church, at which David Paul Brown delivered a discourse on the present peculiar aspect of affairs in relation to Slavery. At this meeting an essay of a memorial to the State Legislature was read and adopted. The language used on the occasion to which it refers, appears to possess sufficient merit to justify us in making the following extracts: "The Memorial of the Pennsylvania Society, &c., Respectfully sheweth, That forty years have now elapsed, since a full conviction of the justice due to a class of fellow beings then existing among us, in considerable numbers, induced your predecessors to make a provision for the gradual abolition of slavery, founded on principles which left to the option of the master to continue to fully assert, or fully to relinquish his claim to the services of the individual." "We have every reason to believe that the number (of slaves) is now so much reduced, as to remove at least one objection (that of expense) to effacing this stain on our national character. It cannot now be very expensive to carry into full effect the wise, benevolent and Christian principles, set forth as the foundation of the Act of March 1, 1790."

"On the general subject of slavery it is needless to enlarge.

We will merely remind your honorable body, that slavery in any and every form is inconsistent with the principles of our free and excellent Constitution. The act of 1780 probably was carried as far as the danger of the country at the time would admit. If, however, a sense of danger then restrained the State from going further, a sense of danger, which, though different in form, is not less serious in aspect, should now impel it to proceed to the full length of the sound and noble doctrine laid down in the preamble to that law."

"The present juncture presents an alarming avowal of principles vitally affecting the nature of our republican governments, Slavery is not merely tolerated, but stamped and impressed on the body of the constitution of a new State, accompanied by an oppressive, wanton and unnecessary discrimination of the rights of citizens, depending merely on the colour of their persons. Against an innovation so alarming, and a precedent so dangerous and injurious, we seem called upon to raise our voice, and to regulate our conduct. The admission of Missouri with such a constitution, no State can singly prevent, but every State that abhors principles so obnoxious, seems bound to remove whatever may be quoted as an example in favour of them, furnished by itself. Thus the immediate and total abolition of slavery within the limits of our own State, becomes a reason of consistency and justice."

"Your memorialists therefore respectfully submit to the Legislature, the propriety of passing a law for the immediate and total abolition of domestic slavery within this commonwealth."

The memorial was directed to be forwarded to the Senate and House of Representatives, and the thanks of the Society were presented to David Paul Brown for his able and eloquent address.

## CHAPTER XII.

1821. *Twelfth month*.—At the stated meeting, a committee\* was appointed “to inquire what measures may properly be taken by the Society for endeavouring to prevent the further introduction of slaves into Florida.” The committee subsequently reported that, in their opinion, an “act of Congress to prevent the admission of slaves into that territory, and to provide for the freedom of all who shall be introduced there, would be an event peculiarly auspicious for the momentous cause which it is the object of this Society to promote.” They add, “there are sufficient inducements for petitioning Congress on this subject; as a government is to be formed for Florida at this session of Congress, our hope of success is by no means unreasonable. But even should it fail, there still would be advantages derived from petitioning, for the cause of humanity gains by every agitation of the subject.” It being afterwards understood that the American Convention had determined upon presenting a memorial to Congress upon this subject, the Society postponed further procedure thereon.

The Society appears to have been frequently engaged in visiting the coloured people in their places of public worship, to communicate either verbally or by printed addresses such counsel and advice as was considered best adapted to improve their minds, and lead them to the practice of virtue, sobriety and industry; so that by their orderly conduct, they might become good and useful citizens. At the annual meeting, Twelfth month, 1822, it was resolved, “that whereas, the expediency of occasionally addressing the people of colour on the subject of their moral conduct and deportment being manifest, a committee be now appointed to prepare an address to them on those subjects.” They were directed to have five hundred

\* Thos. Earle, Edwin A. Atlee, J. Field, Jr., Jas. Mott, and Benj. Williams.

copies printed and distributed amongst those for whose benefit it was prepared.

1823. *Second month*.—A special meeting of the Society was convened, at which a copy of a communication from the State of Maryland to the Legislature of this State was read, and an essay of a memorial to the Legislature in relation thereto being submitted, it was, after proper consideration, adopted, and directed to be signed by the President and Secretary, and forwarded to the Senate and House of Representatives. A committee of six members\* was appointed to give such attention to the subject of this memorial, as it may appear to require. As the application from the Legislature of Maryland was of a very extraordinary character, and called forth an answer at once energetic and explicit, embodying the nature of the communication from Maryland, together with a statement of the facts in the cases referred to, we quote the principal parts of the memorial :

“ Your memorialists have seen with concern, a representation from a joint committee of the Legislature of Maryland, which has been entered at large upon the journals of the Senate.” “ This document contains, in the first place, a complaint that the citizens of Maryland experience considerable difficulty in recovering their fugitive slaves, when they pass within the limits of the State of Pennsylvania. And secondly, a suggestion that it would be for the interest of our State ‘ to prohibit the settlement of people of colour’ among us.” Two cases are particularly cited as grievances, viz.

1st. It is asserted ‘ that the inhabitants of Kennet Square, (a village in Chester county), instead of assisting, gave to a certain Samuel G. Griffith all the trouble in their power, in his attempt to recover a slave who had escaped from him. The consequence was, a determination on his part to take his slave (at all events); and, in attempting to do so, himself and his overseer lost their lives.’

\*Wm. Rawle, Thos. Shipley, Jas. Mott, Benj. Tucker, Robt. Murphy, and Philip Price, Jr.



The Memorial states, from information received, the facts in this case are briefly as follows:

“In the dead of night, on the 15th of December, 1820, the cottage in which John Reed resided, and where he was at the time entirely alone, was assailed by four persons, who demanded admission to search for stolen goods. He remonstrated in vain against the impropriety of such an attempt, at such an hour. They endeavoured to force open the door; and, in self defence, he shot the foremost, who afterwards was found to be Samuel G. Griffiths, who had not announced himself. Reed afterwards, by means of a club, deprived of his life Peter Shipley, the overseer, who persisted in the endeavour to enter, and who was also unknown to him. The other two persons fled. So far from the inhabitants of the village interfering to protect the slave, or to impede the efforts of the claimant, there is every reason to believe that it was utterly unknown to them that the attempt to seize him would be made, or even that any one was in pursuit of him. The assailant party had arrived after dark, and communicated their intentions to no one.

“John Reed was tried at the next Court of Oyer and Terminer, when the above facts were fully proved, and he was acquitted of the indictment of murdering Griffiths. At the ensuing Court of Oyer and Terminer he was tried on an indictment for the murder of Shipley, the overseer, found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to an imprisonment for a term of years. But we cannot admit that the citizens of this state are liable to censure, if they do not volunteer to return a slave to bondage. The people of this state have long expressed their abhorrence of slavery, and it is conceived that our southern brethren ought to be satisfied, if, in obedience to the laws of the Union, their slaves are not knowingly harboured, nor their endeavours to recover them forcibly opposed. The conscientious opinions of our citizens are secured by the Constitution, and no man can be compelled to act in opposition to them.”

“The other case presents still less reason for applying to the

Legislature. A person was alleged to be the slave, not of the claimant, but of another person, from whom it was not pretended at the time that John Chauncey held any authority to act. Destitute of the proofs of his victim's bondage, Mr. Chauncey requests 'that this person may be held in safe custody two days, to give him an opportunity of returning to Hartford county, and procuring every possible proof that would be demanded. But this was refused.' It requires but little knowledge of the laws, to observe, that a magistrate who would commit, or a sheriff or constable who would detain any one on such a request, would be liable to an action of false imprisonment."

"They respectfully submit that the existing laws of the United States are abundantly sufficient to enable the owners of this unhappy species of property to pursue and recover it within the State of Pennsylvania; but that he, who disclaiming the assistance of those laws, assumes a more forcible mode of procedure, cannot justly complain if his pursuit is attended with trouble, and his exertions fail of success."

"But the provisions of the acts of Congress are frequently perverted to improper and unlawful purposes. The mode of establishing the rights of the claimant is loose and summary; and it is known that many instances have occurred of free people of colour having been sworn to as slaves by persons who made a trade of arresting them, and had it not been for the watchful care of their friends, would have been sold into bondage."

"In regard to the second division of the subject, your memorialists have only to say, that whatever may be the disadvantages or advantages of a large coloured population amongst us, it is an error to suppose the friends of the blacks have promoted it; they have not been invited nor repelled by us. But can the constitutional right of every freeman to enter on our soil, and settle among us, be disputed? No distinction of colour is recognised among us; every man is presumed to be free until he is duly proved to be a slave, as every man is presumed to be innocent until legal proof is adduced of his guilt."

"That class of persons whose accession is represented as

dangerous, is in one sense placed on an equal footing with others. If industrious and honest, they prosper and are protected; if guilty of crime, they suffer under the stern and even hand of justice."

The cultivation of harmony with a sister state is always desirable, but it should not be required of us to sacrifice inborn duties and inherent rights. The friendly motive of the Maryland suggestions on this subject is respected, but it is believed that the wisdom of our own legislature is fully adequate to our own exigencies. The present address has been induced only by a desire that those who have endeavoured to advocate the rights, inform the minds and sooth the sorrows of the Africans, should not by their silence be considered as acquiescing in the letter from the committee of the Maryland Legislature.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

1823. The Legislature of South Carolina having recently passed a law affecting the rights of free persons of colour, the subject was referred to a committee,\* to take such measures in relation thereto as should appear expedient. The committee subsequently reported, that upon a full consideration of the manifest injustice and unconstitutionality of the law of South Carolina,† in subjecting to imprisonment all free coloured mariners

\* Committee: W. Rawle, T. Shipley, J. Mott, B. Tucker, R. Murphy, P. Price, Jr.

† This odious law of South Carolina still continues in active operation, and similar provisions have been adopted by other Southern States. The Legislature of Pennsylvania did nothing in opposition to it. But Massachusetts within a few years adopted some energetic measures in relation to the grossly unjust oppression to which some of her coloured citizens, acting as mariners, were subjected in the ports where that law prevailed. But the mobocratic spirit of the slaveholders completely overruled every attempt of the people of Massachusetts to protect the free coloured people from the operation of their vile laws; and an agent

who should arrive at the port of Charleston, they thought it best to lay the subject before the Legislature of this state. An essay of a memorial for that purpose was produced, wherein is set forth the origin of the constitutional provision, whereby the Southern States were allowed a Representative in Congress equal to three-fifths of their slaves. "Thus, these poor people, who at home were degraded from their natural rights, denied all political character, and recognised only as subjects of property, were received to augment the number of representatives, for whom they could not vote, and of whose acts they did not comprehend the nature, and seldom knew of their existence." Beside this was also inserted in the constitution the privilege of pursuing after absconding slaves, and retaking them from any state wherein they may be found, any law of that state to the contrary notwithstanding.

"For these concessions" (the memorial states) "it formed but a moderate counterpoise, that the citizens of each state should be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states. Yet in total disregard of this constitutional provision for equality of rights and privileges, the law of South Carolina subjects every free person of colour, on arriving at any of their ports or harbours, in the capacity of seaman, steward, cook, or otherwise, to be seized, committed, and detained in jail until the departure of the vessel; and if the captain does not, before his departure, pay the expenses of his imprisonment, the individual is sold into irremediable slavery."

The memorial proceeds in an argumentative way to set forth the necessity of the state government interfering to protect this unfortunate class of its citizens, "who, by their peculiar situation and by common usage, have been shut out from the most lucrative and honourable employments of life. How hard, then, that they must be prevented from following even the hard calling of

appointed by the Governor of that State to reside in Charleston, for the purpose of examining into the cases of free coloured mariners arriving in that port, was ignominiously expelled from the state. Such is the all-controlling power of pure despotism—Slavery.

a seaman's life, in which capacity many of them are highly valued. They pray the Legislature to take this recent law of South Carolina into their serious consideration, and either by representation to the government of that state, or such other manner as may be deemed most expedient, endeavour to avert its injury and injustice."

In the address from this Society to the American Convention, issued in the 7th mo. of the same year, it is stated that "several of our citizens, pursuing their lawful occupation as mariners, having been imprisoned in the port of Charleston, South Carolina, pursuant to a law forbidding free coloured persons from entering that state, under the penalty of imprisonment and a liability to be sold as slaves, this Society petitioned the Legislature of Pennsylvania to interfere in their behalf; but the session closing soon after, it was not acted on. Since that period, the case of a coloured British seaman has been brought before Judge Johnson by habeas corpus, who declared the law unconstitutional. But from recent accounts, it appears the officers of that state pay no regard to his decision."

In the same address the following remarks occur to wit: "We address you at this time with feelings of anxious solicitude for the success of our united exertions in the great cause in which we have embarked. Perhaps at no period were the efforts of philanthropists more necessary to enlighten the public mind than at the present. Recent events in the western parts of our country have shown that the most deplorable ignorance prevails respecting the baneful effects of slavery: instead of witnessing the gradual advancement of emancipation to reduce the number of slaves in the United States, we have had with sorrow to observe their numbers progressively to increase. Raised like cattle for the market, they are driven from one state to another, and sold to the highest bidder."

"We have also seen with astonishment and regret, that the slaveholder, no longer fearful of reproach, has dared to propose to the citizens of Illinois and of Indiana to change their free constitution and become the holders of slaves. And while we



lament that the historian must record the fact that this proposal was listened to and acted upon in Indiana, we congratulate the friends of humanity that there was virtue enough in that state, finally to reject it by a large majority. The trial has yet to be passed in Illinois; but we are well informed that it will there be opposed by the united efforts of the wise and good, and we hope we may rely on the mercy of an overruling Providence to open the eyes of the citizens of that state to the depth of the gulf that is yawning before them. It is indeed matter of astonishment, that while the Representatives of these very states in Congress were engaged in the passage of a law condemning the slave-trade as piracy, that this horrid proposal should have been a moment listened to."

At a subsequent meeting, a lengthy but very interesting essay of an address to the inhabitants of Illinois, on the proposed alteration in their constitution, so as to permit slavery in that state, was read and approved. It appears to have been prepared by an individual as his own act, but the Society directed one thousand copies to be printed and forwarded to our friends in that State for circulation.

The final termination of this extraordinary attempt to destroy the free constitution of a State, and extend the limits of slaveholding dominion, resulted in a total defeat of the application for the change, and we rejoice at the present day in still claiming Illinois, as one of the free states of the Union, and a fair proportion of the inhabitants of both states as active and zealous abolitionists.

1823. *Ninth month.*—A printed letter from the Abolition Society of Kentucky on the interesting object for which we are associated, was presented and read; an answer\* to which, was subsequently prepared and forwarded. From that communication we extract the following paragraph, viz. "In answering your truly acceptable communication, we are gratified

\* Committee to prepare an answer: T. Shipley, E. P. Atlee, S. Temple, and James Mott.

in stating that the sentiments it contains, are in full accordance with those constantly promulgated by our institution. As Christians and philanthropists we rejoice in hailing you as co-adjutors, earnestly engaged in endeavours in some measure to wipe off the foul stain which has so long blotted our professedly fair escutcheon."

"This Society have noticed with pleasure, the number of individuals in your state, who have generously enrolled themselves to stem the tide of oppression. Be assured of our fraternal sympathies, and of our continual and fervent wishes for your prosperity. May you be strengthened to surmount every obstacle, and in the end receive the reward of the righteous." "Remember that the enemies of liberty, are actively and industriously engaged in attempts to frustrate our benevolent purposes, and that therefore in combatting with cruelty and oppression, we should exercise charity, and show forth by the innocence and disinterestedness of our lives, that we are actuated by principle."

This Kentucky Society, located as it was in the centre of a large slave population, appears to have existed from 1809, to 1823, a period of fourteen years; how much longer it continued its valuable labours as a society for promoting the abolition of slavery, we have no means of ascertaining, but there appears no further notice on our records of any subsequent correspondence.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

1824. *Second month*.—The Society again, by a Committee\* previously appointed for that purpose, prepared a memorial to Congress, on the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia,

† Committee: William Rawle, T. Earle, Isaac Barton, T. Hale, and J. H. Willits.

it was read, and forwarded to a member of Congress from this city, with a request that it be presented to that body.

An invitation having been extended by Boyer, President of Hayti, through a special messenger, to induce free people of colour to emigrate to that island, a committee\* was appointed to collect information in relation to that subject, who reported in substance as follows :

“ That there was at that time in this city, an authorized agent of the government of Hayti, empowered by President Boyer, to invite all classes and descriptions of free coloured people of good character, to emigrate to that island ; with assurance that they will be received as citizens and children of the Republic ; that they will be protected by its laws, and encouraged and assisted in their several professions.”

“ The invitation of President Boyer proposed to divide the emigrants into three classes. The first to consist of the cultivators or agriculturists. To every family of this class, consisting of twelve persons, or any association, to that number, there would immediately on their arrival be allotted thirty-six acres of unseated or government land, or three acres to each for their support, of which they would become sole proprietors, after they had by their own industry improved the same.”

“ The second class to consist of labourers, or those who embark with a view of cultivating the lands of citizens, already planted with coffee, sugar cane, &c., either by renting or working them upon shares. These would have to come under obligations, on their arrival at Hayti, to enter into the above situation, under the protection of the laws and regulations made for governing such contracts, and to pay in six months the expenses of their passage.”

“ The third class would consist of those who emigrate as mechanics, traders, clerks or schoolmasters. These must also give obligation to repay in six months the expense paid on account of their passage.

\*Joseph Parrish, T. Shipley, Henry Troth, Jonas Preston, J. M. Paul, and B. Tucker.

“ All religious professions are tolerated, and every man left at liberty to worship his Creator, according to the dictates of his own conscience, provided it does not disturb the public tranquillity.”

The report of the committee further states, “ that a vessel with fifty emigrants had sailed from this port within a few days for Hayti, and that upwards of five hundred had engaged to go. The committee were not prepared to express any opinion as to the consequences of this scheme, as it relates to the happiness or improvement of the condition of the emigrants.”

After hearing the report, and considering all the circumstances, it was “ Resolved, That this Society deem it inexpedient at this time to take any steps, or adopt any measures to encourage or discourage the coloured people in embracing the invitation of President Boyer.”

1825. In the address of the Society to the American Convention, the following paragraph occurs, which is quoted here, as an interesting item of history relating to the Abolition of Slavery :

“ The just and magnanimous conduct of the Colombian Government, in abolishing slavery, we trust will not be lost upon the United States. In a population of 3,000,000, it is stated by ‘ *Ravenga*,’ the blacks and Indians amount to 900,000. Of these, a large number were emancipated by individuals at once. Bolivar gave liberty to 700, and others acted in a similar manner. By a law of the state, the children were all made free on the adoption of the Constitution ; and for the liberation of the adults, a legacy duty was levied on all disposable property, varying from three to ten per cent, which fund can never be appropriated to a different object, so long as a slave remains in the state, which is rapidly producing its intended effect.”

We also quote the following with much pleasure, as the same writer’s excellent testimony of the good character of the coloured people :

“ Although at the time the country was overrun with hostile armies, and the masters were frequently obliged to abandon their property, the docility on the part of the blacks, was

never so conspicuous; and the confidence and security of the whites were greater than at any former period."

We may be excused for making another extract from the same document, which having been prepared by the steady characters, who some are wont in these times to refer to, as the old worthies of the Society, very conclusively shows, that even at that date, violent opposition and excitement existed towards the advocates for the rights of the slave.

"The sectional jealousies created by this iniquitous system, —the trembling anxieties of some of the states, lest their usurped rights should be infringed, and the repeated violations of the Constitution, to protect the master from the slave, indubitably prove that the evil has attained its crisis, and calls loudly for a remedy."

The first notice of a periodical, devoted to the purposes of the Society, appears on the minutes of this year, where it is stated that Benjamin Lundy,\* of Baltimore, has for some time

\* The name of Benjamin Lundy, who was a valuable member of this Society, and long and fully identified with the cause of abolition, deserves something more than a passing notice in this connection. A memoir of his extraordinary life and travels has been published, from which we learn that, in early life, he became deeply affected on account of the cruel wrongs and sufferings of the slaves, and determined to devote himself to their relief. He commenced his labours at St. Clairsville, Ohio, in 1815, and succeeded in organizing an Anti-Slavery Society, which soon numbered five hundred members. At the conclusion of an address to one of the first meetings, he stated "That he had had the subject long in contemplation, and had now taken it up, fully determined never to lay it down while he breathed, or until the end should be attained." The resolution thus nobly formed, he seems never, for a moment to have relinquished, or abated in the least degree his earnest pursuit of the object he aimed at. A friend, named Charles Osborne, having commenced the publication of a paper at Mount Pleasant, Ohio, B. Lundy availed himself of its columns to publish essays upon slavery. He subsequently purchased the whole concern, and devoted it entirely to the promotion of the anti-slavery cause, under the title of "The Genius of Universal Emancipation," the publication of which was continued, except some brief intervals, during the remainder of his life. From the issuing of the first number of his paper to the very last, he had to struggle under complicated difficulties — penury, want of



past published a weekly paper in that city, the sole object of which is to promote the abolition of slavery in the United States. Whereupon the Society resolved to patronise it by a loan of fifty dollars, and recommended it to the members for their support.

patronage, bitter enemies, and cold friends, notwithstanding which, he persevered with unremitting energy, acting as editor, compositor, and printer. He frequently worked at the trade of a saddler, (to which he had served an apprenticeship) to earn a few dollars to procure materials for his paper. Besides this, he was frequently engaged in travelling from place to place in almost every State in the Union, lecturing upon slavery, the subject ever present and most near to his heart. He was the principal means of instituting a large number of Societies in the different States of the Union, many of them in slaveholding districts, which were in some instances composed in part of slaveholders. The inconsistency of such a mixture of opposing interests, may account for the fact, that none of those Societies are now existing, and are almost forgotten. Their decline was doubtless owing to the jealous and all-controlling influence of slavery.

The views of Benjamin Lundy were decidedly favourable to the colonization of the free people of colour, provided it could be done with their own consent. To ascertain with clearness how far it would promote the real welfare of those people to emigrate to Hayti, he visited that island twice, and was favourably impressed with the project, and many removed there in consequence of his influence. He also made several journeys into Texas, at that time under the Mexican government, for the purpose of procuring a tract of land in that country for an extensive settlement of coloured people—but was prevented from realizing any of his well meant and benevolent schemes by the revolt of Texas, which he then foresaw would aim at being annexed to the United States, and laboured, publicly and by his pen, to arouse the people of this country to see the evils which would result from such a measure.

He died in 1839, after 23 years of unparalleled labours for the promotion of the abolition of slavery, and for the welfare of the free people of colour, in pursuit of which no difficulties deterred, or dangers dismayed him. In his travels, alone, often on foot, he encountered fatigue, hunger and exposure to the frost and snows of winter, the rains and scorching suns of summer, the contagion of pestilence and the miasmatic influence of insalubrious regions—ever pressing onward towards the attainment of the great object to which he had dedicated his existence.

1826. The Society being apprized that a bill had been introduced into the Legislature of Pennsylvania, entitled "An Act to give effect to the Constitution of the United States, relative to fugitives from labour, for the protection of free persons of colour, and to prevent kidnapping," under which plausible title some very erroneous provisions were introduced at the instigation of, and for the benefit of the slaveholders of Maryland and other Southern states, a memorial in relation thereto, was prepared, and a committee appointed to go to Harrisburg, to present it to the Legislature, and endeavour to frustrate the enactment of the bill. They subsequently reported that in conjunction with a deputation from the Society of Friends, whom they found at Harrisburg on the same occasion, they had succeeded in procuring the erasure of the most obnoxious features of the bill.

At the annual meeting, a communication was received from the President, W. Rawle, on the subject of the domestic slave trade; also a copy of a bill which had passed the committee of the whole in the House of Representatives of this state, entitled, "A bill relative to the sale of fugitives from labour." A resolution was adopted, embracing the principle that the Society believe it to be competent to the authorities of this state to prohibit the domestic slave trade within its limits. A very interesting memorial was also prepared, and presented to the Legislature, in which it stated that the feelings of the citizens of the southern and western borders of this Commonwealth, are frequently outraged by the passing through of droves of human beings, of both sexes, and of all ages, manacled together. And in many instances, the extremities of suffering, the indecencies and enormities of the African slave trade have been observed. They pray that the Legislature would stigmatize this nefarious traffic with the same epithets on the American, that it bears on the African shores. They also assert as the belief of the Society, that, "the honor and character of the state, can only be sustained by altogether interdicting the passage through this commonwealth, of the objects of that cupidity, which equally transports its victims from

the shores of Africa, or the confines of Virginia." The memorial concludes by soliciting that the bill now before the House, may be so amended as to prevent the transportation of persons intended for sale, through the state.

It may be proper to mention, although there is no record of the fact on the minutes of the Society, that in the course of this and the following year, a weekly periodical was published in Philadelphia, edited by Enoch Lewis, under the title of "The African Observer," which contained a large amount of useful matter, tending to illustrate the necessity of abolishing slavery, and proving such a measure to be at once consistent with principle and sound policy.

1827. *Twelfth month*.—A committee was appointed to consider the propriety of taking a census of the coloured people of the city and county of Philadelphia, and of examining into their condition. That committee subsequently reported sundry statements compiled from official documents in the office of the chief marshal for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for 1820, and from books or other documents in the County Commissioner's office for 1821 and 22, furnishing an interesting account of that class of our population at that time. The statement was probably prepared by the late Joseph M. Paul, whose devotion to the cause of the oppressed, and particularly to everything which had a tendency to the improvement of the coloured people, was conspicuous during many years. It is only a just tribute to the memory of this worthy man to state, that it was mainly owing to his assiduous exertions, in conjunction with Roberts Vaux, while acting as a member of the Board of Directors of Public Schools, that the coloured people were admitted to the rights which they now enjoy under the new school law of this state; and that the commodious school house, known as the Lombard street school, was built and established for their use and benefit.

The statement alluded to contains the following :

Number of coloured males in city and county,	4454
“ “ “ Females, “ “	6132

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Total,	10,586
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There were 219 taxable estates reported, the value of which as returned by the assessors, amounted to \$114,839; and two coloured men were assessed for a personal tax.

In relation to the means for the education of coloured children, the committee ascertained that there were at that time in operation, the two Clarkson schools, one for boys, and the other for females, under care of this Society, having 189 scholars; three schools under care of the Society of Friends, and known as the Willing's Alley school, one of which was a night school; in all 164 scholars; one under care of the Friendly Association, with 31 scholars. There were also two schools, with 58 scholars, supported by funds left by Dr. Bray. Besides these, there was ten private schools, kept mostly by coloured teachers, averaging from 6 to 32 scholars. Total number of children enjoying the advantages of school education, 352 males, and 272 females.

The American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, having determined to try the experiment of carrying their operations into the slave states, assembled in Baltimore, 11th mo. 3d, 1828, and it may not be uninteresting in these reminiscences of the incidents of the Society, to state the routine of business which the convention pursued. At this meeting, there were seven societies represented by delegates. Committees were appointed upon the following subjects :

1. On the African Slave trade ; 2. On the Internal or Domestic Slave trade ; 3. On the State of Slavery in the United States ; 4. On the laws relating to slaves and the free people of colour ; 5. To prepare a memorial to Congress in relation to Slavery in the District of Columbia ; 6. To prepare an address to the citizens of the United States, and one to the different Abolition Societies. On these subjects some of the reports presented were highly interesting.

1829. *Eleventh month.*—The convention met at the city of Washington. In the address of this Society to that body, much satisfaction is expressed at the prospect of their assembling at the seat of the general government, as they say, "There in the face of the National Representatives, frankly and firmly to

exercise the rights of freemen, in discussing, recommending and promoting those pure and holy principles, on which our separate and general associations are founded." The convention was urged by the society, to expose by every means in their power, the atrocious inconsistency of slavery with the institutions of free America, and especially to direct attention to its existence in the District of Columbia; they also refer to some startling facts stated to the House of Representatives, in January last, by C. Miner, Esq., at that time a member of Congress; and to a resolution of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania, in 1828, on the same subject.



## CHAPTER XV.

1830. A period of half a century, had now elapsed since the Legislature of Pennsylvania, on the 30th of March, 1780, passed the celebrated act for "The gradual abolition of Slavery." By the provisions of that act, all the children born of coloured parents, were declared free, on attaining a certain age. Thus Pennsylvania took her position amongst the free states of the Union. This character, although severely denounced in the slaveholding states, was soon widely known amongst the victims of oppression; many of whom in their ignorance believed that if they could escape and get into Pennsylvania, they would be secure from the pursuit of their masters. Great numbers accordingly absconded, and being pursued under the laws of the United States, were arrested, and often dragged in the most brutal manner before magistrates previously known to be favourable to the slaveholder; thus they were often remanded upon insufficient testimony, and returned into hopeless slavery. In this manner many free blacks, were, under colour of law, kidnapped, and consigned to bondage even without the aid of law.



The labours of the acting committee were thus greatly increased, while the artifice of secret arrests, and hasty clandestine proceedings before the magistrates, were resorted to by negro catchers, (as the emissaries of the slaveholder were called,) in order to prevent the hated interference of the Abolitionists between them and their unfortunate victims. The Society, and its acting committee, were unremitting in watchful care over the rights of the coloured people, and although they could not prevent the recovery by a southern claimant, of what he alleged to be his property, when ample proof was legally presented, yet numerous cases are on record, where by active and persevering exertions many persons were rescued from the ruthless grasp of slaveholding agents, who had long before been manumitted, and enjoyed for years the sweets of liberty.

The increase of labour occasioned by these frequent and vexatious arrests induced the Society to take decided action on the subject. A memorial was prepared and presented to the Legislature, setting forth the grievances to which free people of colour were exposed, and the difficulties which the Society encountered in defending their right to liberty, as a consequence of these measures. A supplement to the aforesaid law, for the suppression of kidnapping, &c., was enacted, by which persons arrested as slaves, were not allowed to be taken before aldermen or magistrates, but before a judge of one of the courts. This served as a considerable check upon the kidnappers, and relieved the acting committee from a great deal of extra service; for although this branch of duties continues to claim the attention of that committee, and many very interesting cases are annually reported to the Society, it is very evident from inspection of the minutes, that its labours were from that time greatly diminished.

The evil spirit of slavery seems to have frequently beset the Legislature of Pennsylvania, in order to obtain some modification of our laws upon this subject, as we again find on the minutes of 1831, notice of a committee having been appointed to confer with the members of the Legislature, in order to prevent the passage of any law unfavourable to the coloured people.

A memorial was subsequently prepared upon the subject, and a committee appointed to go to Harrisburg, to attend to its presentation.

The expediency of having public lectures delivered upon the subject of slavery, appears to have occasionally engaged the attention of the Society; and in 1832, a committee was appointed to consult with the counsellors of the Society, to endeavour to prevail on some of them to deliver, on the 4th of July, an oration "on the existence of slavery and the domestic slave-trade in the United States, and its influence on the happiness of the community." It does not appear, however, that any thing was done. But the next year, 1833, a discourse of the kind was delivered on the 4th of July, by Dr. Edwin P. Atlee.

In the course of this year, the sorrowful tidings was received of the death of the celebrated philanthropist, William Wilberforce, through whose indefatigable labours in the British House of Parliament, the African slave-trade received its final abolition, so far as the British nation was concerned. The Society appointed David P. Brown to deliver an eulogium on the life and character of this excellent man.

The Society, although still favourable to the gradual abolition of slavery, and having encouraged the formation of most of the Societies which had been instituted for promoting emancipation upon that system, or for protecting the people of colour in the enjoyment of the rights they had acquired, appears to have had no jealousy towards the new Anti-Slavery Societies, which were now beginning to be formed in many places. As a specimen of the manner in which these Societies were viewed by this, the records for this year, 1833, show that a letter had been received from Robert B. Hall, the Secretary of the New Haven Anti-Slavery Society. A committee was appointed to prepare a suitable reply; in which it is stated "That the Society had received the communication with much satisfaction, and cordially welcome the New Haven Anti-Slavery Society into the ranks of the friends of universal liberty, and among the firm opposers of slavery and the slave-trade, both foreign

and domestic." "In the year 1794, several Societies were organized, and numbered among their members many of the most distinguished philanthropists of our country. Since that time we have seen one after another discontinue its labours, until we were left almost alone. By the unwearied efforts of Benjamin Lundy, and those who supported him, a number of new institutions were formed in the southern portion of the Union. But, unfortunately, they also have shrunk from a contest, which to them appeared for a time hopeless. And now, even in Maryland, we know of no Association for the Abolition of Slavery." "This state of torpor and insensibility," they ascribe to the operation of self-interest, "the real promoters of slavery being those who are engaged in manufacturing and vending its products." The address concludes: "When we reflect on the apathy which has so generally pervaded the United States on this subject, we cannot but rejoice that New England is again coming forth in her might to our assistance."

A considerable time elapsed, as appears by the Minutes, without the occurrence of any thing requiring particular notice, except that in 1835, a memorial was prepared to be presented to Congress, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. In the succeeding year, 1836, the Society suffered a loss in the death of the venerable William Rawle, its senior counsellor, and for many years President of the Society. In him the committee always found a prompt and faithful adviser, and his memory was duly honoured by the Society, at whose request David Paul Brown delivered a very interesting eulogium, which was published at the expense of the Society. Thomas Shipley was elected President in place of the lamented Rawle. But again affliction awaited the Society, and a second time in the same year, was the office rendered vacant by the death of the incumbent. Thomas Shipley died 17th of the 9th mo. 1836. Possessed of almost every requisite for usefulness, he became decidedly the *most efficient friend* of the slave whose name at that time stood upon the rolls of the Society.

Dr. Edwin P. Atlee was appointed to prepare a suitable

memoir of his life and useful labours in behalf of the slaves. But he also paid the debt of nature, before he could have made any progress in the work which had been assigned him. His death was much lamented, and the Society, in appointing Dr. Isaac Parrish to fulfil the duty of delivering an appropriate eulogium upon Thomas Shipley, considered Dr. Atlee worthy of a respectful notice in the same discourse. The service was performed to the satisfaction of the Society and of a numerous audience convened on the occasion of its delivery. It was subsequently published by order of the Society. Doctor Joseph Parrish was elected President, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of the lamented Shipley.\*

\* The name of T. Shipley is so sweetly embalmed in the recollection of all the present race of abolitionists, and is so intimately connected in our minds with the interesting scenes wherein he acted so conspicuous a part, that it is deemed an act of justice to his memory, that some further notice should be taken of his great services, beyond the brief paragraph above quoted, which is all the minutes afford. The following extracts from the interesting memoir, prepared by Dr. Isaac Parrish, will serve to show the excellence of his character.

"The part which T. Shipley acted in the trying scenes so often presented in our courts, arising out of our connection with the system of southern slavery, has invested his character with a remarkable degree of interest, and caused his name to be respected by the philanthropic and good throughout a large portion of our country."

"His energy and zeal in the business of the 'Acting Committee,' soon distinguished him as the most efficient member of the Society, in this department of its duties. So intense was his interest in all cases where the liberty of his fellow man was at issue, that, during a period of many years, he was scarcely ever absent from the side of the unhappy victim, as he sat before our judicial tribunals, trembling for his fate. The promptings of interest, the pleasures and allurements of the world, the quiet enjoyment of a peaceful home, were all cheerfully sacrificed, when his services were demanded in these distressing cases. Often has he left the pursuits of business, in which his pecuniary interests were materially involved, to stand by the unhappy fugitive in the hour of his extremity, with an alacrity and a spirit, which could only be displayed by one animated by the loftiest and the purest principles of philanthropy."

## CHAPTER XVI.

1836. The bold aggressions of the slave power having been manifested in the Congress of the United States, by the passage of a rule of the House, known as the 21st, by which all petitions relating to slavery, were excluded, and John Quincy Adams having signalized himself by extraordinary efforts against the encroachments of slaveholding domination, the Society, by special resolution, passed a vote of thanks to him and several other members of Congress, for their manly exertions on this memorable occasion.

Many of the victims of oppression in the Southern States, prompted by that natural desire for liberty, which is inherent in mankind, courageously braving the dangers of recapture by their masters, left their chains behind and fled towards the free States. Even there, whether slaves or free, no matter how long

“The time and labour expended by Thomas Shipley in protecting the interests of the coloured people would be almost incredible to those who were not aware of his extraordinary devotion to this object. Scarcely a day passed in which he was not engaged in some work of benevolence connected with his philanthropic pursuits.”

“In a memorandum book it is stated that his advice and assistance was bestowed in twenty-five cases in a little more than a month. In one very remarkable case, which occurred at Mount Holly, New Jersey, he spent eighteen days, being assisted by the Abolition Society’s energetic and distinguished counsellor, D. P. Brown.” This was in the 12th month, 1836. In the course of the trial, he performed two long journeys, travelling day and night, although the weather was exceedingly cold and tempestuous, the purpose being to obtain documents of great importance, and by means of which complete success was the result, and the liberty of a valuable and justly respected coloured fellow citizen was secured.” The further benefit which was produced by this trial, was the change it was the means of producing in the public mind in favour of the coloured people—the effect of which resulted in the enactment of a law by the next meeting of the Legislature of New Jersey, granting a trial by jury to all persons claimed as slaves.



they might have spent in the enjoyment of freedom, they were liable at any time suddenly to be arrested under the claim of some person assuming to be their master. In many such cases, which came under the cognizance of the Acting Committee, the rights of the pretended owner were found to be either fictitious or very doubtful. The examinations of slave cases before Judges were often very summary, and the decisions consequently liable to error. The Society, taking these circumstances into consideration, presented a memorial to the Legislature, setting forth the dangers to which the liberties of the coloured people were exposed in such cases by the irrevocable decision of a single judge, and praying that in all cases where personal freedom or slavery for life was involved, it should be submitted to a regular jury trial. The following year a similar application was made to the State Convention, for altering the Constitution.

1837. One of the objects for which the Society was instituted, being to promote the improvement of the coloured people, a Committee\* was this year appointed to visit them, either in their families or public meetings, as should appear most suitable. They were to extend to them such advice in relation to their rights and duties as citizens and members of the community, as would tend to elevate them in the state of social, moral and intellectual beings. They were also to collect as far as practicable, and preserve such statistical and other information, as will show the condition of the coloured inhabitants of the city and districts, in relation to the following subjects, viz :—Number of persons, value of real and personal property, education, charitable institutions, amount of taxes paid, places of public worship, &c. The committee were directed to keep regular minutes of their proceedings, and to report to the Society quarterly.

The committee finding the duties assigned them too extensive, were subsequently authorized to employ one or more

\* Isaac Barton, Edward Needles, James Mott, Joseph M. Truman, W. Harned, D. Neal, Peter Wright, Edward Hopper, Geo. Pennock, L. C. Gunn, Isaac Parrish.

agents to proceed with the investigations directed. They were to issue a circular Address to the coloured people, explanatory of the objects and wishes of the Society, and the intention of the committee in sending those agents amongst them, and into their families. The committee subsequently made three separate reports, which were directed to be printed for general circulation. As the information contained in these documents is not familiar to the public at large, a few brief extracts may prove interesting.

“The coloured population was found to amount to 18,768. Of whom two hundred and fifty four were ascertained to have paid an average sum of \$278, each, for their freedom, making an aggregate of \$70,612. And of the number who had come from other States of the Union, 273 individuals brought with them money amounting to \$130,626. The real estate held by coloured people was valued at \$550,000, and the personal property, \$800,000, making an aggregate of \$1,350,000.”

“Some estimate of the value of this class of population to the community was deduced by the reports, from the established fact, that the support of each pauper in the Philadelphia Alms House, is ascertained to be \$58.24 per annum. But considering the comforts and conveniences, known to be enjoyed by a large number of the coloured people, it cannot be presumed that their yearly expenditures is over-rated by an average value of \$65 a year, which would amount to the sum of \$1,219,920 per annum. A profit on which sum, to those who enjoy their custom for the necessary articles of food, clothing, and for other comforts, at the supposed moderate rate of 20 per cent, would yield \$243,984, which if divided between 1000 men of business, would afford them each a clear profit on that portion of their trade with coloured people of near 244 dollars a year.”

“The yearly amount of rent paid by the coloured people is \$161,008. The taxes upon the property so rented, is well known to be provided for by the owners, in the rent demanded. The tax which is paid in that way is equivalent to an assessment on a capital of \$161,008, and is estimated at \$17,710.

Add to this \$3,252, actual tax paid upon their real estate, makes the sum of \$20,962. Besides 454 dollars paid for water rent."

"There were returns also made to the committee of no less than 80 chartered beneficial Societies, instituted for the purpose of affording mutual aid in times of sickness and distress, which are believed to have a powerful influence in preventing pauperism and crime."

V "There are 12 schools of a public character, for the free instruction of coloured children. Besides which, there are 13 other schools, three of which are taught by white teachers, and nine by coloured people; the aggregate number of scholars being 1732."

"The committee were aware of the existence of a number of societies amongst the coloured people formed for the purpose of their mutual improvement, and for exciting in each other a laudable spirit of emulation in respect to literary and intellectual pursuits, but the name and specified objects of only a few were obtained."

"There was ascertained to be sixteen houses for public worship, owned by five different religious societies, and comprising a body of near four thousand communicants. The value of the property so held, together with their burying grounds, was valued by a disinterested land broker at \$100,000."

The third and last printed report of the committee contained a register of trades and occupations followed or carried on by coloured people, containing the names of 653 individuals, with their business and places of residence.

The meetings of the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c., having been suspended for several years, a committee was appointed to inquire into the proper course for this Society to pursue in relation to that concern. The committee reported at a subsequent meeting, when it was resolved to propose, in writing, to such Societies as are known to have been represented in the last convention, to hold a special meeting for the purpose of taking such order

in relation to the future assembling of the convention, as should be deemed constitutional and expedient.

1838. The Abolition Societies of New York and Delaware having united with this Society in the propriety of calling a special meeting of the American Convention, a meeting of delegates from the three Societies was accordingly convened in Philadelphia, at which, "after mature consideration, it was determined that, as the great object for which that body was originally organized did not appear likely to be further promoted by its longer continuance, the Convention had better be then dissolved"—which report was adopted. After making provision for the publication and preservation of the minutes of their proceedings, and an amicable division of the funds, the American Convention was dissolved, and adjourned *sine die*, having continued its valuable labours for a period of forty-four years, during most of which time it had exerted a powerful influence on the public mind in relation to slavery.

A committee\* appointed last year to attend to the interests of the coloured people in the convention for amending the Constitution of this State, reported, that an alteration which had been proposed, to prohibit the emigration of coloured people into this State, was passed over, without being acted upon by the convention; but that the introduction of the word "white," before "freemen," so as to limit the right of suffrage to whites only, prevailed by a large majority, notwithstanding the strenuous exertions used to prevent it. In like manner, their endeavours to obtain a constitutional provision for a trial by jury for persons claimed as fugitives from labour, were unavailing—the motion to that effect being lost by an equally large majority. They informed the Society that much powerful argument, and splendid eloquence had been displayed by many of the delegates in behalf of the rights of the coloured people, although entirely lost upon the body to which it was addressed, as there seemed to be in the convention a fixed hostility to that despised people, and a humble subserviency to southern policy was strikingly manifest.

\* Committee: George Griscom, Isaac Barton, Daniel Neal, John Thomason, Isaac Parrish, Edward Hopper, and James Mott.

1839. The minutes of the acting committee, which are read before the Society at every quarterly meeting, still continue to exhibit many highly interesting cases, wherein the liberties and just rights of the coloured people were successfully vindicated, and some remarkable instances of individuals rescued from slavery are upon record within the period mentioned. No other branch of the concerns of the Society appear to have engaged special attention.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

1840. *Third month.*—The sad intelligence of the death of the late President of the Society, Dr. Joseph Parrish, was communicated to the meeting; whereupon the regular business of the Society was suspended. A committee was appointed to bring forward to a future meeting suitable resolutions in relation to this afflicting event. The committee subsequently reported the following, which were adopted :

Whereas, we have learned with deep regret the decease of our late President, Joseph Parrish, M. D.: Resolved, that in the death of this distinguished individual, our Society has lost one of its most zealous and valuable members—that in his character we recognize an unbounded philanthropy, a pure and comprehensive benevolence, embracing as its object every species of human calamity and suffering.

Resolved, That in his efforts to promote the purposes of this Society, our departed brother was actuated by a principle of universal justice, which abhorred oppression of every kind, and acknowledged the rights and liberties of every human being, irrespective of clime, colour or condition.

Resolved, That we deeply lament the departure of one eminent for the purity, fidelity and inflexible integrity which he exhibited in all the relations of life—for his enlightened and discriminating mind—for his uncompromising devotion to



truth—for the urbane, dignified and modest deportment, which always characterized his intercourse with his fellow men, and which rendered him an ornament and a beautiful example in our community.

Resolved, That Edward Hopper be requested to prepare a discourse upon the life and character of the deceased, and deliver the same before a meeting of this Society.

Resolved, That the officers of the meeting be requested to sign and present to the family of the deceased, a copy of the preceding resolutions, and that they be published in the daily papers of our city.

From the manuscript copy of the Memoir prepared by Edward Hopper, in accordance with the above resolution of the Society, we have been permitted to make the following extracts :

“ Joseph Parrish was born in the city of Philadelphia, the 2nd of 9th month, 1779. His parents, Isaac and Sarah Parrish, were highly respectable members of the Society of Friends.”

(His father was also one of the original and prominent members of the Pennsylvania Society for promoting the abolition of slavery, and his children, particularly the object of our present notice, profiting by his example, and careful religious training, early imbibed a remarkable sense of justice and hatred of oppression.) “ The evils of slavery and the cruelty and injustice which consigned so large a portion of his fellow men to oppression and degradation claimed much of his attention. It was impossible, constituted as he was, for it to have been otherwise, as every thing pertaining to the happiness of the human family took a strong hold of his feelings. While yet a boy, he associated himself with others in conducting the first evening school for coloured persons, established in Willing’s Alley,” (in this city.)

“ Soon after attaining the period of manhood, he became a member of the Society, under whose auspices we are now convened, and on the death of our excellent ‘ Shipley,’ he was made our President. He soon became well known to the coloured

community, and embraced many opportunities to promote the welfare of that deeply injured people. He frequently accompanied his venerable uncle John Parrish," (also one of the old members of the Abolition Society,) "who was concerned many times to visit those in authority, to intercede for his oppressed fellow creatures. His pen, his tongue, and his purse were often employed on their behalf. Several years ago he prepared and published in one of our daily papers a series of essays on the subject of Colonization, which showed successfully that that scheme was calculated in its tendency to rivet more securely the fetters of the slave."

"When during the session of the late Convention for amending the Constitution of this State, the subject of disfranchising the coloured people was under discussion, he believed it to be his duty to address that body under his own signature. He accordingly published a letter to its honored and distinguished President, giving his views at length upon the subject, and earnestly entreating them not to stain the record of our supreme laws by such an unrighteous distinction."

"He was ever ready in his own religious Society, to bid God-speed to every movement that was likely to hasten the day of emancipation, and he loved to recur to the labours of Woolman and Benezet, and others, who with his own revered ancestors had been active in their efforts to break the chain of oppression. And however slowly the work seemed to progress, he was anxious to persevere, and to embrace every right opening to advance the righteous testimony. He had not forgotten the labours of Dillwyn, Harrison, Hoare, Knowles, Lloyd and Woods, members of his own religious Society, who met in London, in 1783, to consider what steps they should take for the relief and liberation of the negro slaves in the West Indies, and for the discouragement of the slave-trade on the Coast of Africa. He knew the difficulties with which they were surrounded, but he also knew that the God of the oppressed had caused their work to triumph."

Dr. George B. Wood, in his memoir of the life and character of Dr. Joseph Parrish, delivered before the Medical Society of

Philadelphia, says: "A strenuous advocate on all occasions for the rights of his fellow men, he suffered no motives of present convenience to prevent him from interfering by word and deed, whenever he believed these rights to be invaded. The wrongs of the poor Indian were not unfrequently the subject of his pen, and his sympathy for the degraded negro was ever active, though preserved by his sound judgment within the bounds of propriety. Like all the members of his sect, an uncompromising opponent of slavery, he never hesitated to express his sentiments upon the subject, nor to yield his aid and counsel in individual cases. He was long a member and ultimately President of the old Pennsylvania Abolition Society, in which office he had been preceded by Drs. Wistar, Rush, and Franklin." "He was selected by the eccentric John Randolph, when on his death bed in Philadelphia, to be a witness of his last wishes in relation to his slaves; and as a necessary consequence to be the organ of those wishes before the Courts of Virginia. For the due performance of that office, he was peculiarly qualified; as with the firmness which enabled him to adhere unswervingly to what he believed to be truth and justice, he combined a suavity of manner, a benevolence of feeling, an openness of character, and an obvious singleness of purpose, which disarmed hostility, and disposed even those who were most averse to his views, to admire and love him as a man."

At an adjournment of the stated meeting for the 6th month, Edward Needles was elected President, and at a subsequent meeting of the Society, part of a memorial of General Gaines to Congress was read. Whereupon the following preamble and resolution was adopted:

*Whereas*, Edmund Pendleton Gaines, a Major General in the United States army, in his memorial to Congress, dated Nashville, Tennessee, December 31, 1839, charges "*the advocates of human freedom, more familiarly called abolitionists,*" with being organized bands of British spies, and pioneers secretly employed in preparing and hastening a tragedy of blood and desolation. And *whereas*, this charge is not true—and is a

direct impeachment of the character and patriotism of a large and reputable class of American citizens. Therefore

*Resolved*, That this Society feels called upon by a sense of duty to itself, and to the cause of humanity in which it is engaged, respectfully to request General Gaines to produce the evidence upon which he has founded this charge of treason on our part against the best interests of our common country."

A committee was appointed to present him with a copy of this resolution. He soon after left here for New Orleans, having paid no attention to the subject.

1841. The managers of the House of Refuge for juvenile offenders, having constantly refused to admit coloured children to the benefits of that institution, the subject engaged the attention of the Society for a considerable length of time. Memorials and remonstrances were addressed to the managers, and subsequently a committee was appointed to confer with them upon the subject. They reported that the board had adopted sundry resolutions favourable to the erection of additional buildings for the accommodation of coloured children who may require to be sent into such an institution, provided the funds necessary for the erection of such buildings, were procured through the instrumentality of this Society, or the friends of the coloured people at large. It being a time of great difficulty in monied concerns, it was deemed to be a peculiarly inauspicious season to attempt the collection of funds; further proceedings thereon were suspended for the present.

1842. *First month*.—The annexation of Texas to the United States being much talked of, the Society became interested in the measure contemplated, which being strongly advocated by the politicians of the Southern states, was considered by many to be eminently calculated to extend the area of slavery, and strengthen the bands of oppression. The Society deemed it worthy of enquiry; and a committee was appointed to prepare a memorial to Congress upon the subject, which was subsequently adopted, and directed to be forwarded to our representatives in that body.

The Society having become considerably reduced in the number of members, and the interest in its concerns seeming to decrease, and the burden of the cause pressing heavily upon a few individuals, the subject was taken up for serious consideration. A committee was appointed to inquire what measures, if any, could be adopted for its resuscitation, and to extend the sphere of its usefulness. In their report, the committee attribute the low state of the Society, in great measure, to a diminution of the value of its active capital, the yearly income from which is so far reduced as to be inadequate to sustain the heavy expenses incurred by the acting committee. Some account of the extraordinary services in which the said committee had been engaged, are detailed, the expenses of which for the year, amounts to \$368; in attending to more than forty cases wherein their services had been required, and which gave occasion to write and receive seventy-five letters. They had also prepared and sent out twelve sets of freedom papers, and documentary testimony on behalf of free people of colour, kidnapped or taken up at the South, and rendered liable to be sold as slaves. Most of these cases occurred in New Orleans, and some in Florida. In consequence of the vindictive and cruel laws of the slave states, these demands upon the acting committee are constantly increasing; and were the funds at their disposal adequate, their services could be extended with far more advantage than has ever yet been done. It was further proposed that these subjects, together with such information of a like character as may be deemed expedient to circulate amongst the community, be laid before a public meeting to be convened for the purpose, by circular notices written for the occasion. The report of the committee was adopted, and a special meeting of the Society was accordingly held in public. Several addresses were delivered on the occasion, and considerable interest was manifested; the result of which was the offer of a number of names of individuals as candidates for membership.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

1843. *First month.* A committee, appointed at a previous meeting, to propose such measures as would promote the general purposes for which the Society was formed, reported, "that they believe it would be proper to send a memorial to Congress, asking them to amend the Constitution of the United States, so as to exonerate the citizens of this Commonwealth from all participation in slavery. That a similar memorial be sent to the Legislature at Harrisburg, asking them to repeal all laws of this State that in any wise uphold slavery." The Committee also reported a series of resolutions, as follows :

1. "*Resolved*, That while as citizens of Pennsylvania, we claim no right directly to interfere with slavery within the limits of the slaveholding States, we do assert that our own soil ought to be really free to all that tread upon it."

2. "*Resolved*, That as Pennsylvania, by her laws, institutions, public offices or property, cannot directly interfere to put an end to slavery within the limits of other States, so she ought not by these or any other means to lend her aid to uphold or perpetuate slavery in any part of the earth."

These resolutions were adopted, and directed to be published in the daily papers, and memorials were prepared in accordance with the suggestions of the Committee.

The provisions of the law for the education of all the children of this Commonwealth having been for some time past extended to the coloured people, the schools which this Society had supported for their benefit for a series of years past, had become less necessary. Some attempts were made by the Society to establish a school wherein the higher branches of education should be provided for coloured children, but the expenses incurred exceeding the funds properly belonging to education purposes, the experiment was abandoned. The schools under care of the Society were suspended for several years, but the funds of the Board were now (6th mo. 1843) so

far recovered as to justify further attention to the subject of education. A committee was appointed to inquire into the state of the funds, and into the expediency of again organizing a school for coloured children. That committee reported that much inconvenience was found to exist amongst poor coloured women, who were under the necessity of leaving their little children at home, without proper care takers, while they were necessarily absent, in pursuit of their lawful engagements. The committee therefore recommended the establishment of an infant school, under the care of the Society. The Board of Education whose duties had been suspended, was re-organized, and the school put into successful operation. The report of the Board to the annual meeting, states the number of children on the roll to average 78, and with 58 in regular attendance. The establishment of this school has given much satisfaction to the coloured people, and has afforded the children the benefit of a much needed preparation for admission into the public primary schools, through which they must pass previous to entering into the grammar schools.

1844. The following preamble and resolution was produced to the Society, by a committee previously appointed for the purpose, and adopted :

“Whereas, we have been informed of the death of our venerable and distinguished townsman, Peter S. Duponceau, who for a period of nearly half a century was connected with this Society, and who maintained through life, a lively interest in the promotion of universal liberty ; therefore, Resolved, That in the death of this venerable man, the cause of human rights has lost one of its earliest and most ardent advocates ; a man whose heart warmed towards his fellow man of every clime and colour, and who looked with abhorrence upon that system of oppression which makes property of human beings.”

“Resolved, That a copy of the foregoing preamble and resolution, be published in the daily papers, attested by the officers of the Society.”

At the same meeting, a memorial to Congress was adopted, again remonstrating against the admission of Texas into the

Union. It was directed to be forwarded to one of our Senators at Washington, and published in some of the daily papers.

1845. The Society again addressed the Managers of the House of Refuge, upon their continued refusal to admit coloured children into that institution. The subject was taken up by the committee specially appointed "for the improvement of the coloured people," who visited all their places of public worship, where, after the religious exercises were over, the members of the committee addressed the congregation upon several subjects pertaining to their moral and religious welfare, and urged upon them the necessity of taking measures to induce the managers of the House of Refuge to admit such coloured children as unfortunately require the beneficial restraints of such an institution. Petitions to the managers for that object were presented for their signatures, and about eight hundred names were subscribed. A similar petition was circulated by the committee, which was signed by a considerable number of our most respectable white citizens, and presented to the managers. These measures are believed to have had the effect of rousing the board to action upon this question. They were followed by a public meeting of citizens, at which a large and energetic committee was appointed for the purpose of raising money to enable the managers to purchase a lot of ground, and to erect a suitable building for the reception of coloured juvenile offenders. But as the intention of the managers, and of the committee, as set forth in their appeal to the public for funds, was to institute a total separation between the white and coloured children, the Society considered it inexpedient to participate in the movement, under the impression that the introduction of such a principle into our penal institutions, would be a departure from the settled policy of our state, and calculated still further to rivet the prejudice against our coloured population.

1846. At an adjourned meeting held First month, of this year, a memorial to the Legislature of the state was adopted, requesting the repeal of all laws that are now in existence, which tend to the support or sanction of slavery in any manner

whatever ; also, one of a like tenor and for the same objects, for general circulation. A great number of signatures were obtained to these petitions, which were entrusted to a committee appointed to attend to their presentation, with authority to send a special delegation to Harrisburgh for the purpose of promoting the objects of the petitioners. Strong hopes were entertained that the great exertions of the Society would have been successful, but the session passed over without anything being done. At the next meeting of the Legislature, the Society again presented a memorial upon this important subject, strongly remonstrating against magistrates, judges, sheriffs, or any other officers of the state, being allowed to act in any case of persons claimed as slaves ; and that our public prisons should not be used as receptacles for the confinement of such ; and that no citizen of any other state shall be permitted to hold a slave within the limits of this commonwealth for the term of six months, as heretofore allowed ; and asking that our coloured population may be shielded as far as the strong arm of law can protect them, from the danger to which they are now exposed of being arrested as slaves, upon fraudulent pretexts. The memorials were, as heretofore, presented to both houses of the Legislature. On this occasion they were respectfully received and referred to special committees, who reported a bill, which was subsequently passed unanimously, providing in almost every respect for what the Society had asked for. Thus were their long and arduous exertions for the relief of this much injured people crowned with success. It is but an act of justice, however, to acknowledge, that this much desired law was obtained by the assistance and zealous co-operation of the Society of Friends.

## CHAPTER XIX.

The rise and progress of this Society has now been detailed through a period of seventy-two years. It commenced as an association of a few benevolent individuals of the Society of Friends, formed for the purpose of protecting the liberated slave from being kidnapped, and to act as their advisers. But in the gradual development of light, the great doctrine of the equality of the human family, which formed the basis of the testimony of the religious Society of Friends against slavery, through the operation of which they had rid themselves of this sin, began to be infused into the public mind.

From them as from a bright focus, emanated those rays of light and truth, which illuminated the minds of some of the leading men of that age, and fired them with enthusiasm in favour of the rights of man. Prompted by the sentiments of patriotism, benevolence and philanthropy, they saw the little band of Friends, who formed the first association for the relief and protection of the oppressed descendants of Africa, and comprehending at once the extent and importance of the principles involved, and the beneficial results they were capable of producing, in favour of that unfortunate and degraded class of the human family, joined themselves to the Society, and by their united influence infused fresh vigor into its councils. In view of the more enlarged sentiments entertained by the mass of the people, in relation to the principles of civil liberty, and which were acknowledged to pertain with equal force to all classes, without respect to colour, the constitution was altered, and the present title of the Society adopted.

In process of time, they became a numerous and influential body, in the full career of dignified usefulness; with boldness and the stern independence of freemen, conscious of their own rights, but liberal towards others, addressing the august tribunals and legislatures of States and of the nation, in behalf of



the victims of oppression, in terms of respectful but urgent entreaty for their relief, so far as the utmost stretch of the constitution would permit. We see them withstanding to the face the angry slaveholder, maddened almost to fury at having his right to the trembling object of his pursuit not only doubted, but resisted, and he compelled to prove his claim by the strictest rules of law. Hundreds of cases are on record where such resistance has resulted in successfully vindicating the just rights of the coloured man, against the atrocious attempt of some unprincipled agent to establish a claim of ownership, which had no foundation either in law or equity.

As the physical powers of man are incapable of sustaining long and unremitting toil, but will inevitably fail under its incessant continuance, so it would seem to have been with the abolitionists of the last century. Their labours were of a character eminently calculated to exhaust the energies of men actively engaged in carrying on the great work of "promoting the abolition of slavery, the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage, and for improving the condition of the African race." They came into immediate conflict with slavery, as practically carried out, and laboured actively to convince the judgments of their opponents of the sinfulness of holding their fellow creatures in bondage; in addition to this, they were in almost daily attendance before magistrates, Courts, and judges, in defence of the rights of the poor trembling fugitives from oppression. Such is a mere shadow of their labours; indeed, time would fail us, to enumerate the trials and difficulties they had to sustain. Is it any wonder, then, that men who had seen such service should break down, and as they advanced in years, feel the necessity of rest, and gradually retire from the conflicts in which they had so long been engaged. Thus by unavoidable desertion, by death, and various other causes, the numbers of the Society were greatly diminished.

Fortunately, however, those cases of judicial controversy with the slaveholders, which formerly occupied so much of the time and attention of the acting committee, and consumed so much of the funds of the Society, have for several years been

less frequency, and at the present time are comparatively of rare occurrence ; so that the energy which formerly characterized the Society, and which put to the test the courage of its members, is seldom in these times brought into action. Hence the apparent decline of the Society, which for want of the powerful stimulus of direct conflict with slavery, is not so actively engaged, and has passed into a state of comparative ease and tranquillity.

But it does not follow that the standard of its principles has been lowered, or that its usefulness has ceased. Its acting committee is still busily employed in defending the rights of persons seized as slaves, and it is still alive to the progress of events upon the momentous question of slavery in the United States.

The condition of the coloured population of the city and adjoining districts, although far in advance of what it was at the organization of this Society, is also a subject<sup>2</sup> which still occupies its close attention. The schools already instituted for the education of coloured children, have largely contributed to benefit the people as a class, and will demand the vigilant attention of the Society, under whose fostering care it is hoped much may yet be effected towards the elevation of the coloured youth of our city. It would not be difficult to point to many families amongst them, whose intelligence and moral standing in the community, is justly referable to the early training they received in these schools, and it has afforded encouragement to many members of this Society, to hear the acknowledgment of numbers of respectable individuals, that to these schools, they were, under the divine blessing, mainly indebted for their success in life. Hence has also arisen that thirst for knowledge amongst the coloured population, which has lead to the formation of societies for promoting the exercise of their intellectual faculties, and for the pursuit of literary and scientific objects.

The importance of sustaining a Society on which devolves the performance of such services, must be apparent to every reflecting mind, and we cannot but solicit renewed interest in its concerns from all those who desire to witness the progress

of those principles, which it was instituted to promote. It is a link in the chain of operations, which cannot be dispensed with, seeing that it performs a part of the great work which can be done by no other Association. Those who really love the cause of the slave, should cherish this Society, give it their patronage, their devoted, active and cordial support.

Let it be remembered that it was one of the earliest instrumentalities through which the great principles of universal emancipation were promulgated in America, and that by its steady adherence to these principles during a long course of years, its movements have become closely interwoven with the yet unwritten history of the Abolition of Slavery, so so far as it has yet progressed. That it may continue its labors, until that great work is completed, must be the ardent desire of its friends and supporters.



While this memoir was passing through the press, it was suggested to the Committee of Publication, that the Constitution of the Society, as it existed at the time of the Act of Incorporation, would be useful to the members, and particularly interesting to the descendants of the original Corporators into whose hands this publication may chance to come; it was therefore concluded to print the Constitution as adopted in 1787; and to insert such alterations and amendments as have subsequently been made.

CONSTITUTION  
OF THE  
PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY.  
FOR  
PROMOTING THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, &c.

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It having pleased the Creator of the world, to make of one flesh all the children of men—it becomes them to consult and promote each other's happiness, as members of the same family, however diversified they may be, by colour, situation, religion or different states of society. It is more especially the duty of those persons, who profess to maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who acknowledge the obligations of Christianity, to use such means as are in their power, to extend the blessings of freedom to every part of the human race; and in a more particular manner, to such of their fellow creatures, as are entitled to freedom by the laws and constitutions of any of the United States, and who, notwithstanding, are detained in bondage, by fraud or violence. From a full conviction of the truth and obligation of these principles—from a desire to diffuse them, wherever the miseries and vices of slavery exist, and in humble confidence of the favour and support of the Father of Mankind, the subscribers have associated themselves, under the title of the "Pennsylvania Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and the Relief of free Negroes unlawfully held in Bondage."

For effecting these purposes, they have adopted the following constitution:

I. The officers of the society shall consist of a president, two vice-presidents, two secretaries, a treasurer, twelve counsellors, (viz: six from the city and county of Philadelphia, and one from



each of the following counties, viz: Bucks, Montgomery, Lancaster, York, Northampton and Delaware) an electing committee\* of twelve, and a board of education of thirteen, and an acting committee of six members; all of whom, except the last named committee, shall be chosen annually by ballot, on the last Fifth-day called Thursday, in the month called December.

II. The president, and in his absence one of the vice-presidents, shall preside in all the meetings, and subscribe all the public acts of the society. The president, or in his absence, either of the vice-presidents, shall moreover have the power of calling a special meeting of the society whenever he shall judge proper. A special meeting shall likewise be called at any time, when six members of the society shall concur in requesting it.

III. The secretaries shall keep fair records of the proceedings of the society, and shall correspond with such persons, and societies, as may be judged necessary to promote the views and objects of the institution.

IV. The treasurer shall keep all the monies and securities belonging to the society, and shall pay all orders signed by the president or one of the vice-presidents—which orders shall be his vouchers for his expenditures. He shall, before he enters upon his office, give a bond of not less than two hundred pounds, for the faithful discharge of the duties of it.

V. The business of the counsellors shall be to explain the laws and constitutions of the states, which relate to the emancipation of slaves, and to urge their claims to freedom, when legal, before such persons or courts as are authorised to decide upon them.

VI. The electing committee shall have the sole power of admitting new members. Two-thirds of them shall be a quorum for this purpose—and the concurrence of a majority of them by ballot, when met, shall be necessary for the admission of a member. No member shall be admitted, who has not been proposed at a general meeting of the society, nor shall an election for a member take place in less than one month after the time of his being proposed. Foreigners or persons who do not reside in this state, may be elected corresponding members of the society, without being subject to an annual payment, and shall be admitted to the meetings of the society during their residence in the state.‡

\* The Electing Committee subsequently was annulled.

† In 1847 the Acting Committee was made to consist of seven members, and the words "except the last named committee" was to be stricken out.

‡ In 1830 this article was repealed and the following substitute adopted, to wit: "No person shall be admitted to membership who has not been proposed at a previous meeting of the society, nor shall an election take place in less than one month after the time of his being proposed. The concurrence by ballot of two-thirds of the members present at a stated meeting shall be necessary for the admission of a member."

"For eigners or persons who do not reside in this state may be elected corres-

VII. The board of education shall superintend the schools established by the society, and manage the funds appropriated to their support. Seven\* members shall constitute a quorum to transact the general concerns of the board. All orders, drawn by their chairman, and attested by their secretary, shall be paid by the treasurer of the society. They shall keep regular minutes of their proceedings, and produce them at every stated meeting of the society.

VIII. The acting committee shall transact such business as shall occur in the recess of the society, and report the same at each quarterly meeting. They shall have a right, with the concurrence of the president or one of the vice-presidents, to draw upon the treasurer for such sums of money as shall be necessary to carry on the business of their appointment; and be authorised to employ a clerk to transcribe their minutes into a book provided for the purpose. Four of them shall be a quorum. [After the first election, two of their number shall be relieved from duty at each quarterly meeting, and two members shall be appointed to succeed them.†]

IX. Every member upon his admission, shall subscribe the constitution of the society, and contribute two dollars annually, towards defraying its contingent expences: (Provided, that any member paying at one time the sum of thirty dollars or upwards, shall be exempt from all future annual contributions.) If he neglects to pay the same for more than two years, he shall, upon due notice being given him of his delinquency, cease to be a member.

X. The society shall meet on the last Fifth-day called Thursday in the months called March, June, September and December, at such place as shall be agreed to by a majority of the society.

XI. No person holding a slave shall be admitted a member of this Society.

XII. No law or regulation shall contradict any part of the constitution of the Society, nor shall any law or alteration in the constitution be made, without being proposed at a previous meeting. All questions shall be decided, where there is a division, by a majority of votes. In those cases where the Society is equally divided, the presiding officer shall have a casting vote.

pending members of the society without being subject to an annual payment, and shall be admitted to the meetings of the society during their residence in the state."

\* In 1847 altered to "Five."

† This was stricken out in 1847 and the Committee made to be elected annually.

## RESOLUTION, ADOPTED JULY 5th, 1790.

*Resolved*, That in case of the death of the president, either of the vice-presidents, or of the treasurer, or that either of them should refuse or decline to act in their stations respectively, or be removed for misconduct, notice shall be given thereof to a general meeting of the Society, to be convened for that purpose, within thirty days after such vacancy shall happen; at which meeting the Society shall proceed to elect by ballot (in the same manner as at the annual election) some other suitable member or members of this corporation to succeed in the place and stead of such officer so removed by death or otherwise; and for the purpose of such election, the secretaries or either of them, are hereby authorized and directed to call such general meeting, by advertising the time and place thereof, at least three days before the day appointed for the same, in two or more of the public newspapers of this city; and in case the secretaries shall neglect or refuse to perform this service, the committee of correspondence, and on their neglect, the acting committee shall have the power and authority, and are hereby directed to call such general meeting in the manner and for the purposes aforesaid.

*Resolved*, That in case of the absence of the president and vice-presidents from any meeting of the Society, the members present are empowered and authorized to appoint some other member to act in the station at that time.













